A BEAUTIFUL COLOURED PLATE GIVEN AWAY. A £50 PRIZE.

"Pearson's Weekly" Extra Christmas Number

6d.

Edited by
C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.] CHRISTMAS, 1896. [A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

"STRONGEST AND BEST." —*Health.*

Fry's Pure Concentrated Cocoa

OVER 180 GOLD MEDALS and DIPLOMAS.

PURCHASERS SHOULD ASK SPECIALLY FOR FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED COCOA, TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM OTHER VARIETIES MANUFACTURED BY THE FIRM.

SAVE TIME AND TROUBLE BY USING SOUP IN ONE MINUTE.

TRADE MARK.

SYMINGTON'S

PATENT HIGH-PRESSURE STEAM-PREPARED

PEA FLOUR

WHICH HAS OVER 60 YEARS' REPUTATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

INQUIRE FOR IT AT YOUR STORES.

SYMINGTON'S EGYPTIAN FOOD FOR INVALIDS, INFANTS, &c.

SYMINGTON'S WHEAT CRYSTALS Makes Delicious Puddings, Custards, Blanc Mange, &c. Very Nutritious.

Export Agent: J. T. MORTON, LONDON.

Gold Medal Awarded, Health Exhibition, London.

Benger's FOOD

For Infants, Invalids, and the Aged.

Benger's Food is sold in Tins by Chemists, &c., everywhere.

EXTRACTS FROM PRIVATE LETTERS.

"It is with heartfelt gratitude I write to tell you of the great benefit my little daughter Gladys has derived from 'Benger's Food.' The doctor and all who saw her thought we should never be able to rear her. We took her to the hospital, and the authorities recommended 'Benger's Food.' From that time she began to pick up flesh and strength."

"In the public interest I deem it right to inform you what a marvellous change has taken place in my infant since using your 'Benger Food.' We used several Foods till about the end of February, but he made little progress. Mr. ——, the well-know surgeon, called to see him, and strongly recommended your Food. In a week we saw a change, and he is now a strong, healthy child."

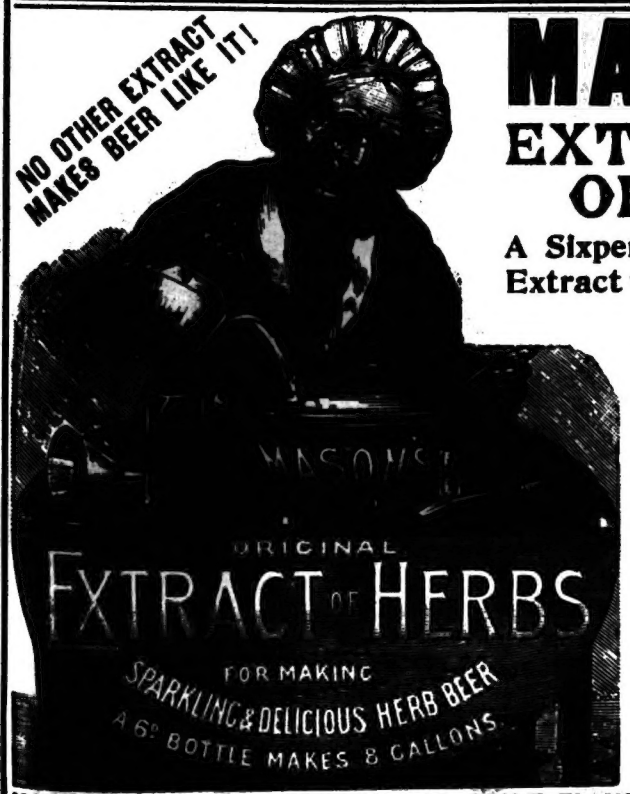
BIRD'S CUSTARD

PURE. WHOLESOME. DELICIOUS.

The unfailing resource of every Lady of the House and Successful Housekeeper.

POWDER

NO EGGS! NO TROUBLE! NO RISK!



MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

A Sixpenny Bottle of this Extract will make 8 gallons splendid

BEER.

TRY IT.

EASY TO MAKE.

THE FINEST

BEVERAGE

IN THE

WORLD.

Send Post-card for Address of Nearest Agent, or Bottle Post Free for 9 Stamps.

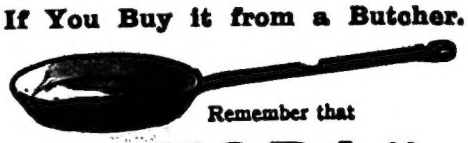
Inventors and Manufacturers:

NEWBALL & MASON, *NOTTINGHAM.*

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES IN ALL FRUIT FLAVOURS MAKE THE BEST WINE FOR CHILDREN'S PARTIES.

YOU PAY TOO MUCH FOR SUET

If You Buy it from a Butcher.



Remember that

"ATORA"

(HUGON'S REFINED BEEF SUET)

is pure English Beef Suet specially prepared, and always ready for use. It effects a large saving in cost, time, and trouble; and if kept in a cool dry, place will remain perfectly sweet for an indefinite period. **HUGON'S REFINED BEEF SUET** is invaluable for Frying, Cooking, Making Puddings, Cakes, Pies, Mincemeat, &c.

Ask your Grocer or Provision Dealer for **HUGON'S REFINED BEEF SUET**, "Atora" Brand, or send ***8d.*** in stamps for a sample 1 lb. package to the Sole Manufacturers—**Messrs. HUGON & Co., Ltd., Pendleton, MANCHESTER.**

8D. *per lb.*

N.B.—**"ATORA"** *is admirably adapted for use in the Colonies and hot climates generally. Large quantities are shipped abroad to places where raw suet cannot be relied upon.*

'LIFE IS NOT GIVEN US FOR THE MERE SAKE OF LIVING, BUT ALWAYS WITH AN ULTERIOR AIM.'—*THOMAS CARLYLE.*

If you had all the KNOWLEDGE, HONOUR, WEALTH, or the HIGHEST SOCIAL POSITION OF THIS WORLD at your Command, you must be measured by the HEART, which should be HUMBLE, HONEST & KIND, for this is

NOBILITY OF MAN.

'The First Test of a Truly Great Man is his Humility.'—*Ruskin.*

'It is very characteristic of the late Prince Consort—*a man himself of the purest mind, who powerfully impressed and influenced others by sheer force of his own benevolent nature*—when drawing up the conditions of the annual prize to be given by Her Majesty at Wellington College, to determine that it should be awarded **Not to the Cleverest Boy, nor the most Bookish Boy, nor to the most Precise, Diligent, and Prudent Boy, but to the Noblest Boy, to the Boy who should show the most promise of becoming a Large-Hearted, High-Motived Man.**'—SMILES.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL.

'THE DRYING UP A SINGLE TEAR HAS MORE OF HONEST FAME THAN SHEDDING SEAS OF GORE.'

As Time rolls his ceaseless course, Christmas after Christmas comes round, and we find our joys and sorrows left behind; so we build up the beings that we are.

WHAT MAKES A HAPPY XMAS?

HEALTH, AND THE THINGS WE LOVE, AND THOSE WHO LOVE US.

What higher aim can man attain, than conquest over human pain?

Every Travelling Trunk and Household ought to contain a Bottle of

ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT.'

'It is not too much to say that its merits have been published, tested, and approved, literally, from pole to pole, and that its cosmopolitan popularity to-day presents one of the most signal illustrations of commercial enterprise to be found in our trading records.'—*European Mail.*

IMPORTANT TO ALL LEAVING HOME FOR A CHANCE. DON'T GO WITHOUT A BOTTLE OF ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT.' IT OUGHT TO BE KEPT IN EVERY BEDROOM, IN READINESS FOR ANY EMERGENCY. IT PREVENTS DIARRHŒA, AND REMOVES IT IN THE EARLY STAGES.

ZANZIBAR.—THE UPPER DISTRICTS OF THE CONGO.—BLOOD POISONS.—A GENTLEMAN writes: 'Your preparation is without doubt the first in its class in febrifuge preparations. During my journeyings from Zanzibar to the Upper Districts of the Congo, as well as a long residence in the Tropics, I have never felt safe without it.—Yours truly, VERITAS. February, 1895.'

STIMULANTS.—CONGESTION OF THE LIVER.—Experience shows that Poisonous Aniline Dyes, Pink or Chemically Coloured Sherbert, or Acidulated Sherbert masked with Sugar, Hazardous Brain Tipples, or any form of Pick-me-up, Porter, Mild Ales, Port Wine, Dark Sherries, Sweet Champagne, Liqueurs, and Brandies are all very apt to disagree; while Light White Wines, and Gin and Old Whisky, largely diluted with Mineral Waters charged only with natural gas, will be found the least objectionable. ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' is peculiarly adapted for any constitutional weakness of the liver. It possesses the power of reparation when digestion has been disturbed or lost, and places the invalid on the right track to health.

THE DANGER OF CHILLS, FEVERS, WORRY, BLOOD POISONS, &c.—ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' assists the functions of the LIVER, BOWELS, SKIN, and KIDNEYS by NATURAL MEANS: thus the blood is freed from POISONOUS or other HURTFUL MATTERS, the FOUNDATION and GREAT DANGER of CHILLS, FEVERS, WORRY, BLOOD POISONS, &c. It is IMPOSSIBLE to OVERSTATE its GREAT VALUE. THERE IS NO DOUBT that, where it has been taken in the earliest stage of a disease, it has in innumerable instances prevented a SEVERE ILLNESS. Its effect on a disordered and feverish condition is SIMPLY MARVELLOUS. It is in fact NATURE'S OWN REMEDY, and an UNSURPASSED ONE. Without such a SIMPLE PRECAUTION, the JEOPARDY OF LIFE IS IMMENSELY INCREASED.

The value of Eno's 'FRUIT SALT' cannot be told. Its success in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and New Zealand proves it.

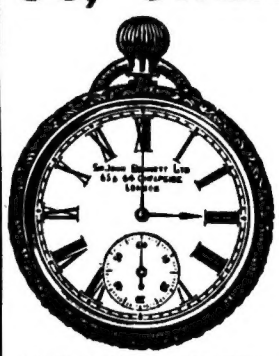
CAUTION.—Examine each Bottle and see the Capsule is marked ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT.' *Without it, you have been imposed on by worthless imitations.*

PREPARED ONLY AT ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' WORKS, LONDON, S.E., BY J. C. ENO'S PATENT.

SIR JOHN BENNETT LTD.,

Watch, Clock, and Jewellery Manufacturers,

65, CHEAPSIDE, LONDON, E.C.



LADY'S GOLD KEYLESS WATCH,

£5, £7, £10, £15.
In silver, £3, £4, £5, £6.

BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY, BRITISH AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, AND THE PRINCIPAL RAILWAY COMPANIES, &c., &c.

LADY'S GOLD KEYLESS LEVER,

£10, £12, £15, £18.
In Silver, £4, £5, £6, £8, £10.

SILVER WATCHES from £2.

GOLD WATCHES from £5.

GOLD CHAINS AT Manufacturers' Prices.

PRESENTATION WATCHES,

£10, £20, £30, £40, £50 to £250.

Arms and Inscriptions emblazoned to order.

£5.

THE "CHEAPSIDE" SILVER KEYLESS ¾-PLATE ENGLISH LEVER,

In strong, Crystal Glass Case, Jewelled in Rubies, Chronometer Balance, air, damp, and dust tight. The cheapest Watch ever produced.

AN ENGLISH STANDARD GOLD KEYLESS ¾-PLATE HALF-CHRONOMETER. Accurately timed for all Climates, Jewelled in 13 actions. 18-carat Gold Case, with Monogram or Crest richly emblazoned. In Crystal Glass Hunting or Half-Hunting Cases, £25. In Silver, £15.

JEWELLERY.

Special attention is called to this Department, the Stock having been considerably increased by a new and elegant assortment of the most exquisite designs, mounted in diamonds and other precious stones.

CLOCKS—THE FINEST STOCK IN LONDON AT PRICES LOWER THAN EVER.

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES POST FREE.

SIR JOHN BENNETT Ltd., 65, CHEAPSIDE, London, E.C.

KEEP THE

FROM THE DOOR

BY BUILDING UP A GOOD CONSTITUTION ON

HOVIS BREAD.

Of this Bread so great an authority as the "LANCET" says: "Its food value, both as regards nitrogen and phosphates, is, broadly speaking, double that of bread made with ordinary wheaten flour."

IT CURES INDIGESTION AND SO PROMOTES GOOD HEALTH.

IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FLATTERY.—The Public are cautioned against accepting from Bakers spurious imitations of "HOVIS," which, having met with such unprecedented success, is being copied in many instances as closely as can be done without risk.

6d. and 1s. Samples on receipt of stamps.

Purchasers are requested to see that all Bread supplied to them as "HOVIS" is stamped "HOVIS."

If any difficulty be experienced in obtaining "HOVIS," or if what is supplied as "HOVIS" is not satisfactory, please write, sending sample (the cost of which will be defrayed), to

S. FITTON & SON, Millers, MACCLESFIELD.

Bakers recommending another Bread in place of "HOVIS" do so for their own profit. BEWARE!

Apply to your Baker or Grocer for **"HOVIS" FLOUR** for Home Use. Packed in Bags of 3½lb. and 7lb.

"PEARSON'S WEEKLY" EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

CHRISTMAS, 1896. PRICE SIXPENCE.

The Way to Keep Him.

BY F. FRANKFORT MOORE.

I.

"NAY, sir," cried Mrs. Abington, with such a smile of infinite witchery as she wore when Sir Joshua Reynolds painted her as "Miss Prue"; "I would not have you make any stronger love to me than is absolutely necessary to keep yourself in training for the love scenes in Dr. Goldsmith's new comedy."

"Ah, you talk glibly of measuring out the exact portion of love, as if love were a physic to be doled out to the precise grain," cried Lee Lewis, impatiently turning away from the fascinating lady who was still smiling archly at him over the back of her chair.

"By my faith, sir, you have e'en given the best description of love that I have heard; 'tis beyond doubt a physic given to mankind to cure many of the ills of life; but, la, sir, there are so many quacks about 'tis well-nigh impossible to obtain the genuine thing."

And once more the actress smiled at her latest victim.

"I have often wondered if you ever knew what love means," said he.

"Indeed, the same thought has frequently occurred to me, sir," said the actress. When one has been offered the nostrums of quacks so often one begins to lose faith in the true prescription."

"You think that I am a quack, and, therefore, have no faith in me?" said Lewis.

"I know that you are an excellent actor, Mr. Lewis."

"And, therefore, you suspect my truth?"

"Nay, I respect your art."

"Perish my art, so long as I gain the favour of the most adorable woman who ever flitted like a vision of beauty——"

"Ah, sir, do not take advantage of my lack of memory; give me the title of the comedy from which you quote so that I may know my cue, and have my reply ready."

Lewis flung himself across the room with an exclamation of impatience.

"You are the most cruel woman that lives," he cried. "I have often left this house vowing that I will never come nigh it again because of your cruelty."

"What a terrible vengeance!" cried the actress, raising her hands, while a mock expression of terror came over her face "You would fain prove yourself the most cruel of men because you account me the most cruel of women. Ah, sir, you are ungenerous; I am but a poor, weak creature, while you——"

"I am weak enough to be your slave; but let me tell you, madam, I am quite strong enough to throw off your bonds should I fail to be treated with some consideration," said Lewis.

"Oh, so far as I am concerned you may take your freedom to-morrow," laughed Mrs. Abington. "The fetters that I weave are of silken thread."

"I would rather wear your fetters though they be of iron than those of the next loveliest woman to you, though hers should be a chain of roses," said the actor. "Come, now, my dear lady, listen to reason."

"Gladly; 'twill be a change from your usual discourse, which is of love—just the opposite, you know."

"Why will you not consent to come with me to Vauxhall once more?"

"La, sir, think of the scandal! Have not we been seen there together half-a-dozen times?"

"Scandal! Do you think that the scandal-mongers can add anything to what they have already said regarding us?"

"I place no limits on the imagination of a scandal-monger, sir, but I desire to assign a limit to my own indiscretions which, I fear, have set tongues wagging."

"Pooh! my dear madam, cannot you see that tongues will wag all the faster if I appear at the Gardens with some one else?"

"Say, with your wife. Surely you are not afraid of the tongue of slander if you appear by the side of your wife, sir."

"'Tis for you I fear."

"What, you fancy that people will slander me if you appear at Vauxhall with your lawful wedded wife?"

"Even so, for they will say that you are not strong enough to keep me faithful to you."

Mrs. Abington sprang to her feet.

"The wretches!" she cried. "I will show them that—psha! Let them say their worst. What care I what they say? I'll go or stay away as the fancy seizes me."

"You may take your choice, my dear madam," said Lewis. "Whether would you rather be slandered—for coming with me, or for staying at home?"

"The terms are not the same in both cases," said she; "for if I go with you I know that I shall have an excellent supper."

"So you'll come? Ah, I knew that you would not forsake me," he cried, catching her hand and kissing it.

"You foolish man! You take credit to yourself for a decision that is due to the prospect of a supper!" said Mrs. Abington.

"Ah, I know what I know, my dear," cried he. "And so I will take my leave, lest you should change your mind."

"I protest, sir," said she, as he kissed her hand again. "I protest that 'twas the thought of the supper decided me."

He roared with laughter.

So did she when he had left her house.

"What fools these men are!" she cried, throwing herself back on her couch with a very capacious yawn. "What fools! The idea of a poor woman being influenced by the thought of minced chicken in a decision that involves being by their side seems preposterous to them! Oh, if they but knew all that such a woman as I am could tell them!"

She laughed softly—subtly—as certain recollections came to her, for Mrs. Abington was a lady of many recollections.

After a space she resumed her study of the part of Miss Hardcastle, for which she had been cast by Colman in Dr. Goldsmith's new comedy, but which, the following week, to her everlasting regret, she relinquished in favour of Mrs. Bulkley.

Lee Lewis, who was studying the part of young Marlow, had accompanied her home after rehearsal. He had, during the previous month, shown himself to be extremely polite in regard to her, for he had walked home with her several times, and more than once he had been seen by her side at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, as well as at the Pantheon in the Oxford Road. People about the theatre were saying that the beautiful Mrs. Abington had added to the number of her conquests, and Miss Catley, the most imprudent of all the imprudent ladies in Colman's Company, said some very spiteful things regarding her. (It was understood that Miss Catley had angled for Lee Lewis herself, but without success.)

Before Mrs. Abington had been alone for half-an-hour, her maid entered to tell her that a lady was inquiring for her at the hall door.

"Another of our stage-struck misses, Lucette?" said the actress, alluding to the three visits which she had had during the week from young women who were desirous of obtaining a footing on the stage.

"Nay, madam, this lady seems somewhat different," replied the maid.

"Then let her be shown in at once, whoever she may be," said Mrs. Abington. "There can surely be no scandal in receiving a lady visitor."

She gave a glance at a mirror, and saw that her hair was in a proper condition for the reception of a visitor who was a lady. She knew that it did not mattter so much when her visitors were of the other sex; and a moment afterwards there entered a graceful little woman, whom she could not recollect having ever seen before. She walked quickly to the centre of the room, and stood there, gazing with soft grey eyes at the actress, who had risen from her sofa, and was scrutinising her visitor.

There was a pause before Mrs. Abington, with a smile—the smile she reserved for women—quite different from that with which she was accustomed to greet men, said:

"Pray seat yourself, madam, and let me know for what I am indebted for the honour of this visit."

But the lady made no move; she remained there gazing at the actress without a word.

Mrs. Abington gave a laugh, saying, as she returned to her sofa: "Do not let me hurry you, my dear lady, but I must ask your pardon if I seat myself."

Then the stranger spoke.

"You are Mrs. Abington. I wish I had not come to you. Now that I find myself face to face with you I perceive that I have no chance. You are overwhelmingly beautiful."

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

"Did you come here only to tell me that? Faith, you might have saved yourself the trouble, my dear. I have known just how beautiful I am for the past twenty years," cried the actress.

"I did not come here to tell you that," said the visitor; "on the contrary, I meant to call you an ugly haridan—a vile witch, who glories in seeing the ruin of good men; but now—well, now, I am dumb. I perceive that you are so beautiful it is only natural that all men—my husband among the number—should worship you."

"You are so flattering, my dear madam, I can without difficulty perceive that you have not lived long in the world of fashion, ay, or in the world of the play-houses," said the actress.

"I am Mrs. Lewis, madam," said the lady, and then dropping into a chair she burst into tears.

Mrs. Abington went beside the unhappy woman and patted her on the shoulder.

"Dear child," she said, "the thought that you are Mr. Lewis's wife should not cause you to shed a tear. You should be glad rather than sorry that you are married to a gentleman who is so highly esteemed. Your husband, Mrs. Lewis, is a great friend of mine, and I hope that his wife may become even a greater."

"Ah—ah!" moaned the lady. "A friend? a friend? Oh, give me back my husband, woman—give me back my husband, whom you stole from me."

She had sprung to her feet as she spoke her passionate words, and now stood with quivering, clenched hands in front of the actress.

"My good woman," said Mrs. Abington, "you have need to calm yourself. I can assure you that I have not your husband in my keeping. Would you like to search the room? Look under the sofa?—into all the cupboards!"

"I know that he left here half-an-hour ago—I watched him," said Mrs. Lewis.

"You watched him? Oh, fie!"

"You may make a mock of me, if you please. I expected that you would; but he is my husband, and I love him—I believe that he loved me until your witchery came over him, and—oh, I am a most unhappy woman! But you will give him back to me; you have many admirers, madam; one poor man is nothing here or there to you."

"Listen to me, my poor child." Mrs. Abington had led her to the sofa, and sat down beside her, still holding her hand. "You have spoken some very foolish words since you came into this room. From whom have you heard that your husband was—well, ensnared by me?"

"From whom? Why, everyone knows it," cried Mrs. Lewis. "And, besides, I got a letter that told me——"

"A letter from whom?"

"From—I suppose she was a lady; at any rate, she said that she sympathised with me, and I'm certain that she did."

"Ah, the letter was not signed by her real name, and yet you believed the slanders that you knew came from a jealous woman? Oh, Mrs. Lewis, I'm ashamed of you!"

"Nay, I did not need to receive any letter: my husband's neglect of me made me aware of the truth—ah, it is the truth, whether you deny it or no!"

"You are a silly goose, and I have half a mind to take your husband from you, as mothers deprive their children of a toy when they injure it. You don't know how to treat a husband, madam, and you don't deserve to have one. Think how many girls, prettier and cleverer than you, are obliged to go without husbands all their lives, poor things!"

"It is enough for me to think of those women who are never satisfied unless they have other women's husbands in their train, madam."

"Look you, my dear, ill-treated creature, I do assure you that I have no designs upon your husband. I do not care if I never see him again, except on the stage."

"Is that the truth? Ah, no, everybody says that Mrs. Abington is only happy when——"

"Then leave Mrs. Abington's room if you believe the statements of that vague everybody."

The actress had risen and was pointing in fine, tragic style to the door.

Mrs. Lewis rose also, but slowly; her eyes fell beneath the flashing eyes of Mrs. Abington. Suddenly she raised her head, and put out a trembling hand.

"I will not believe what I have heard," she said. "And yet—yet—you are so very beautiful."

"That you think it impossible I should have any good in me?" laughed the actress. "Well, I do believe that I have some good in me—not much, perhaps, but enough to make me wish to do you a friendly turn in spite of your impudence. Listen to me, you little goose. Why have you allowed your husband to neglect you, and to come here asking me to sup with him at Vauxhall?"

"Ah, then 'tis true!" cried the wife. "You have gone with him—you are going with him."

"'Tis true that I went with him, and that he left me just now believing that I would accompany him to the Gardens on Monday next. Well, what I want you to explain is, how have you neglected your duty towards your husband so that he should stray into such evil ways as supping with actresses at Vauxhall?"

"What! would you make out that his neglect of his duty is my fault?"

"Great heavens, child! whose fault is it if it is not yours? That is what I say: you don't deserve to have a toy if you let some strange child snatch it away from you."

"I protest, Mrs. Abington, that I scarce take your meaning: I have nothing to reproach myself with. I have ever been the best of wives. I have never gone gadding about to balls and routs, as some wives do; I have remained at home with my baby."

"Exactly. And so your poor husband has been forced to ask certain actresses to bear him company at those innocent pleasures which he, in common with most gentlemen of distinction, enjoys. Ah, 'tis you domestic wives that will have to answer for your husbands' backslidings."

"Is it possible that—why, madam, you bewilder me. You think that I should—I don't know what you think—oh, I'm quite bewildered."

"Why, child, have you not seen enough of the world to have learned that a woman is most attractive to a man when he perceives that she is admired by other men? Have you not seen that a man seeks to marry a particular woman, not because he cares so greatly for her himself, but because he believes that other men care greatly for her? Your good husband is, I doubt not, fond enough of you; but when he perceives that you think much more of your baby than you do of him—when he perceives that the men whom he considered his rivals before he carried you off from them no longer follow in your train, is he to be blamed if he finds you a trifle insipid? Ah, let me tell you, my sweet young wife, a husband is a horse that requires the touch of a spur now and again. A jog trot is not what suits a spirited creature."

"Heavens, madam! You mean that he—my husband—would be true to me if only I—I——"

"If only you were not too anxious that he should keep pace with the jog-trot into which you have fallen, my dear. Do you not fancy that I know he wishes me to sup with him only because he is well aware that a dozen men will be longing to mince him when they see him mincing my chicken for me?"

"But I would go with him to the Gardens if he would ask me, only—ah, no one would want to mince him on my account!"

"You goose! Cannot you see that you must place him in the position of wanting to mince the other man?"

"How? I protest that I am bewildered."

Mrs. Lewis, accompanied by her dashing escort.

"Dear child, go to the Gardens, not with your husband, but with another man, and you will soon see him return to you with all the ardour of a lover with a rival in view. Jealousy is the spur which a husband needs to recall him to a sense of his duty now and again."

"I will never consent to adopt such a course, madam. In the first place, I cannot force myself upon any gentleman of my acquaintance."

"Then the sooner you find one on whom you can force yourself, the better chance you will have of bringing your husband to your side."

"I may be foolish; but I cannot bring myself to go alone with any man to the Gardens," said her visitor in a low tone.

"Then good-bye to you," cried the actress, with a wave of her hand.

The little lady went slowly to the door; when there she cast an appealing glance at Mrs. Abington; but the latter had picked up her copy of the new comedy, and was apparently studying the contents. With a sigh Mrs. Lewis opened the door and went out.

"Foolish child! She will have to buy her experience of men, as her sisters buy theirs," cried Mrs. Abington, throwing away the book.

She rose from her seat and yawned, stretching out her arms. As she recovered herself her eyes rested on a charcoal sketch of herself in the character of Sir Harry Wildair in the *Constant Couple*, done by Sir Joshua Reynolds' pupil, Northcote. She gave a little start, then a laugh. She ran to the door, and called out to Mrs. Lewis who had not had time to get to the foot of the stairs.

"Come back for one moment, madam," cried Mrs. Abington over the banisters; and when Mrs. Lewis returned, she said: "I called you back to tell you to be ready dressed for the Gardens on Monday night. I will accompany you thither in my coach."

"You mean that you will——"

"Go away now, like a good child. Ask no more questions till Monday night."

She went away, and on the Monday night she was dressed to go to Vauxhall, when the room in which she was waiting was entered by an extremely handsome and splendidly dressed young gentleman, who had all the swagger of one of the beaux of the period, as he advanced to her, smirking.

"I protest, sir," cried Mrs. Lewis, starting up, "you have made a mistake. I have not the honour of your acquaintance."

"'Fore Gad, my charmer, you assume the airs of an innocent Miss with amazing ability," smirked her visitor. "My name, madam, is Sir Harry Wildair, at your service, and I would fain hope that you will accept my poor escort to the Gardens."

A puzzled look was on Mrs. Lewis's face as the gallant began to speak, but gradually this expression disappeared. She clapped her hands together girlishly and then threw herself back on a chair, roaring with laughter.

II.

THE next day at the playhouse, Mrs. Abington met Lee Lewis with a reproachful look. She had written to him on the Saturday, expressing her regret that she could not go with him to the Gardens, but assuring him that she would be there, and charging him to look for her.

"I thought you would believe it worth your while to keep an eye open for me last night, sir," she now said. "But I dare say you found some metal more attractive elsewhere."

"By heavens, I waited for you for an hour on the lantern walk, but you did not appear," cried Lewis.

"An hour? Only an hour?" said the lady. "And pray how did you pass the rest of the time?"

"A strange thing happened," said Lewis after a pause. "I was amazed to see my wife there—or one whom I took to be my wife."

"Ah, sir, these mistakes are of common occurrence," laughed Mrs. Abington. "Was she, like her husband, alone?"

"No, that's the worst of it; she was by the side of a handsome young fellow in a pink coat embroidered with silver."

"Oh, Mrs. Lewis would seem to have borrowed a leaf from her husband's book—that is if it was Mrs. Lewis. Have you asked her if she was at the Gardens?"

"How could I ask her that when I had told her that I was going to the playhouse? I was struck with amazement when I saw her in the distance with that man—did I mention that he was a particularly good-looking rascal?"

"You did, but why you should have been amazed I am at a loss to know. Mrs. Lewis is a very charming lady, I know."

"You have seen her?"

"She was pointed out to me last night."

"Heavens! then it was she whom I saw in the Gardens! I would not have believed it."

"What, are you so unreasonable as to think that 'tis a wife's duty to remain at home while her husband amuses himself at Vauxhall?"

"Nay, but my wife——"

"Is a vastly pretty young creature, sir, whom a hundred men, as exacting as her husband, would think it a pleasure to attend at the Gardens or the Pantheon."

"She is beyond doubt a sweet, young creature; but lord, madam, she is so bound up in her baby that she can give no thought to her husband, and as for other men—did you see the youth who was beside her?"

"To be sure I did. He was devoted to her and so good-looking! I give you my word, sir, I never saw anyone with whose looks I was better pleased."

"Zounds, madam, if I had got near him I would have spoilt his good looks, I promise you. Good lord! to think that my wife—I tried to get close to her, but the pair seemed to vanish mysteriously."

"You would have been better employed looking for me. But we will arrange for another evening, you and I, Mr. Lewis."

"Yes, we will—we will."

There was not much heartiness in the way Mr. Lewis assented, and, when the lady tried to get him to fix upon an evening, he excused himself in a feeble way.

The day following he walked with her to her house after rehearsal, but he did not think it necessary to make use of any of those phrases of gallantry in which he had previously indulged to her. He talked a good deal of his wife and her attractions. He had bought her a new gown, he said, and beyond a doubt it would be difficult to find a match for her in grace and sweetness. He declined Mrs. Abington's invitation to enter the house. He had to hurry home, he said, having promised to take his wife by water to Greenwich Park.

During the afternoon a letter was brought to Mrs. Abington. It was from Mrs. Lewis, and it stated that the writer was so much overcome with the recent kindness and attention which her husband had been showing her, she had resolved to confess that she had played a trick upon him, and begged Mrs. Abington's leave to do so.

Mrs. Abington immediately sat down and wrote a line to her.

"Don't be a little fool," she wrote. "Are you so anxious to undo all that we have done between us? If you pursue that course I swear to you that he will be at my feet the next day. No, dear child, leave me to tell him all that there is to be told."

Two days afterwards Lee Lewis said to her:

"I wonder if 'tis true that my wife has an admirer?"

"Why should it not be true, sir? Everything that is admirable has an admirer," said Mrs. Abington.

"She is not quite the same as she used to be," said he. "I half suspect that she has something on her mind. Can it be possible that——"

"Psha, sir, why not put her to the test?" cried Mrs. Abington.

"The test? How?"

"Why, sir, give her a chance of going again to the Gardens. Tell her that you are going to the playhouse on Thursday night, and then do as you did before, only keep a better look out for her, and—well, you must promise me that if you find her with that handsome young spark you will not run him through the body."

"You seem to take a great interest in this same young spark," said Lewis.

"And so I do, sir. Lord, sir, are you jealous of me as well as of your wife?"

"Jealous? By my soul, madam, I desire nothing more heartily than to hear of your taking him from my wife."

"Then carry out my plan, and, perhaps, I shall be able to oblige you. Put her to the test on Thursday."

He walked off looking somewhat glum, and in another half-hour she had sent a letter to his wife asking her to be dressed for Vauxhall on Thursday night.

The Gardens were flooded with light—except in certain occasional nooks—and with music everywhere—it is scarcely necessary to say that the few dimly lighted nooks were the most popular in the Gardens.

As Mrs. Lewis, accompanied by her dashing escort, descended from the coach and walked up the long avenue towards the tea house, many eyes were focussed upon her, for all the town seemed to be at Vauxhall that night. But only the quick eyes of Mrs. Abington perceived the face of Lee Lewis at the outskirts of the crowd. Mrs. Abington smiled: she knew perfectly well that her disguise was so complete as to remain impenetrable, even to her most familiar friends; and she had a voice to suit the costume of the beau, so that upon previous occasions she had, when in a similar dress, escaped all recognition, even at one of the balls at the little playhouse in the Haymarket.

She now swaggered through the crowds, rallying after the most approved style of the modish young spark her somewhat timid companion, and pointing out to her the various celebrities who were strolling about under the coloured lamps. She pointed out the lively little lady, who was clearly delighted at being the centre of a circle of admirers, as Mrs. Thrale, the wife of the great brewer. Around her were General Paoli, the Corsican refugee; the great Dr. Samuel Johnson, Dr. Burney, the distinguished musician; and Richard Burke, just home from Grenada.

Some distance further on stood Oliver Goldsmith, the author of the new comedy in which Lee Lewis was cast for the part of young Marlow, and Mrs. Abington for the part of Miss Hardcastle. Dr. Goldsmith wore a peach bloom velvet coat, and a waistcoat covered with silver. He was making the beautiful Miss Horneck and her sister, Mrs. Bunbury, laugh heartily at some of his witty sayings, which were too subtle to be understood by such people as James Boswell and Miss Reynolds, but which were thoroughly relished by the two girls who loved him so well.

In another part of the grounds Sir Joshua Reynolds walked with his friend David Garrick, and when she caught sight of the latter, Mrs. Abington hurried her companion down a side walk, saying:

"David Garrick is the only one in the Gardens whom I fear; he would see through my disguise in a moment."

"My husband is not here, after all, for I have been looking for him," said Mrs. Lewis. "You see, he does not always speak an untruth when he tells me that he is going to the playhouse on the nights he is not acting."

"Nothing could be clearer, my dear," said her companion. "Oh, yes, men do speak the truth yes, sometimes."

Mrs. Lewis was anxious to return to her home as soon as she had walked once through the Gardens, but Mrs. Abington laughed and declared that to go away without having supper would make her so ashamed of her impersonation of the reckless young gallant, she would never again be able to face an audience in the playhouse; and supper they had together in one of the raised boxes, Mrs. Abington swearing at the waiters in the truest style of the man of fashion. And all the time they were at supper she could see Lee Lewis furtively watching them.

For another hour the actress and her companion remained in the Gardens, and when at last they returned to the hackney coach, the former did not fail to see that Lewis was watching them and following them, though his wife all the time the coach was being driven homeward, chattered about her husband's fidelity. "He will most likely be at home when I arrive," she said, "and then I will tell him all."

"For fear of any mistake I will enter the house with you," said Mrs. Abington. "I have heard of husbands before now casting doubt upon even the most plausible story their wives invented to account for their absence."

"Great powers!" whispered Lewis.

"My husband will believe me," said Mrs. Lewis coldly.

"I shall take very good care that he does," said her companion.

When they reached the house they learnt that Mr. Lewis had not yet come back, and so Mrs. Abington went upstairs and seated herself by the side of her friend in her parlour.

Not many minutes had passed before her quick ears became aware of the opening of the hall door and of the stealthy steps of a man upon the stairs. The steps paused outside the room door, and then, putting on her masculine voice, the actress cried:

"Ah, my beloved creature, why will you remain with a husband who cannot love you as I swear I do? Why not fly with me to happiness?"

Mrs. Lewis gave a laugh, while her cheek was being kissed—very audibly kissed—by her companion. The next moment the door was flung open, so suddenly that Mrs. Lewis was startled, and gave a cry; but before her husband had time to take a step into the room, Mrs. Abington had blown out the lamp, leaving the room in complete darkness.

"Stand where you are!" cried the actress in her assumed voice. "Stand, or, by the Lord Harry, I'll run you through the vitals."

The sound of her whisking her sword from its sheath followed.

"Who are you, fellow, and what do you want here?" continued the actress.

"The rascal's impudence confounds me," said Lewis. "Infamous scoundrel! I have had my eye on you all night. I am the husband of the lady whom you lured from her home to be your companion."

"Oh, then, you are Mr. Lee Lewis, the actor?" said Mrs. Abington. "Pray how does it come, sir, that you were at Vauxhall when you assured your poor wife that you were going to the playhouse?"

"What? The rascal has the audacity——"

"Husband—husband—a moment will explain all," cried Mrs. Lewis.

"Silence, woman!" shouted the man.

"She had better remain silent," said the actress. "Look you, sir, how often have you not deceived that poor young thing, whose only fault is loving you too well? What, sir, have you the effrontery to accuse her? Does your own conscience acquit you of every attempt to deceive her that you can throw a stone at her? You blame her for going with me to the Gardens. Can you say that you have never made an appointment with a lady to meet you at the same Gardens? What truth is there in the report that you are in the train of Mrs. Abington's admirers?"

"'Tis false, sir! I love my wife—alas! I should say that I did love her—better than a score of Mrs. Abingtons."

"Ah, husband, dear husband!" began his wife, when Mrs. Abington interrupted.

"Hush, child!" she cried. "Let me ask him if he never implored that woman Abington to accompany him to Vauxhall, while he told you he was going to the playhouse? Let me ask him how often he has whiled away the hours in Mrs. Abington's house, assuring his wife that he was detained at the playhouse? He is silent, you perceive. That means that he has still a remnant of what once was a conscience. Mr. Lewis, were it light enough to see you I am sure that we should find that you were hanging your head. What, are you surprised that anyone should admire the wife whom you neglected? You are enraged because you see me by her side at the Gardens. You have played the spy on us, sir, and in doing so you have played the fool, and you will acknowledge it and ask your wife's pardon and mine before five minutes have passed. Call for a light, sir; we do not expect you to apologise in the dark."

"The fellow's impudence astounds me," muttered Lewis. He then threw open the door and shouted down the stairs for a light.

Mrs. Lewis, while the light was being brought, made another attempt to explain matters; but Mrs. Abington commanded her to be silent.

"Everything will be explained when the light comes," said she.

"Yes," said the man grimly, "for men cannot cross swords in the dark."

"There will be no crossing of swords here," said Mrs. Abington.

"Coward! scoundrel! Now we shall see what you are made of," said the man, as a servant appeared on the landing with a lighted lamp.

"Yes, that's just what you will see," said Mrs. Abington in her natural voice, as the light flooded the room.

"Great powers!" whispered Lewis, as he found himself confronted by the fascinating face that he knew so well.

Mrs. Abington had taken off her wig in the darkness, and now her own hair was flowing over her shoulders.

"Great powers! Mrs. Abington!"

"Yes, Mr. Lewis, Mrs. Abington, who only waits to hear a very foolish fellow confess that he has been a fool in letting a thought of any other woman come into his mind when he is the husband of so charming a lady as took supper with me to-night."

Lee Lewis bowed his head, and, kneeling before his wife, pressed her hand to his lips.

A collection of F. Frankfort Moore's Theatrical Stories, illustrated by Robert Sauber, will be published almost immediately from Pearson's Offices, under the title, "The Impudent Comedian."

THE TELL TALE

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM.

AS one of the first London doctors, I naturally meet with varied and strange phases of humanity.

Most medical men have some patients who insist all the year round on a weekly professional visit.

Mr. Domvery is one of these, a dear benign soul, with a splendid constitution, which has only failed him during the past few days. The hand of time has stricken him down, an enemy we doctors ever fail to fight.

Personal sorrow and regret fill my heart as I stand beside his bed, holding the thin bloodless hand, while he informs me (I who know it so well) that the end is near!

Yet his voice is not weak, nor his senses dimmed, and we talk of other subjects than health.

He tells me that he has no one but his beloved old wife in the world, and consults me as to the disposal of his fortune at her death.

Suffering humanity is ever uppermost in my mind, and my answer is characteristic of this feeling.

"Why not leave it to a hospital?" I suggest. "Build and endow a new ward, and raise up for yourself a living tombstone, from which thankful hearts shall sing praise and gratitude day and night for ages to come."

A warm smile flits across old Mr. Domvery's face my advice appears to please him.

"A great idea!" he agrees, looking at me with the light of something like youth in his eyes.

It is eventually arranged on condition that I become trustee for his wife, and after her death I shall have his whole fortune to devote to this object.

In due course Dame Nature has her way, and Mr. Domvery's eyes close for ever on this vale of woe.

His old wife is one of those good trusting people, who bear up under the calamities of life with marvellous fortitude, knowing it will soon be their turn to join the "host of witnesses."

I always think it is easier for the old to part in death.

His wife leaves the big empty London mansion, bereft of its lord and master, to end her days in a peaceful Devonshire town where she owns a house.

I hear she is comfortably settled there with her worthy housekeeper, and though I see the faded blue eyes and kindly smile no more, I forward her dividends four times a year, and receive an acknowledgment.

The letters are always old-fashionedly courteous, and with much the same remark in each, to the effect that though she is older than when she last wrote, her health remains to her unimpaired. Something at this juncture happens to make me prosecute my researches in a hitherto unexplored field of science.

An under servant girl who has come into my service from a country village, on retiring to bed the night of her arrival, blows out the gas, having never seen that light in her cottage home. Tired doubtless from her journey, she drops quickly into a heavy sleep, from which she never wakes. My efforts to restore her to life in the morning are unavailing—she is past all human aid.

It is the first time that this danger has really been brought before me, and my inventive faculties are immediately awakened.

Surely in this age of miracles worked by science, something might be made to avert such catastrophes?

Once I have asked myself this question, I never rest until I bring all my talents and chemical knowledge to bear on the subject. Eventually, after many tedious and complicated experiments, my efforts are repaid!

I produce an automatic machine at a low cost, that every householder may buy, to give the alarm of any escape of gas.

The action of this clever little "tell-tale" is, immediately upon the atmosphere becoming changed in the slightest degree with the fumes of gas, to ring an electric bell, and light an electric light in it.

The bell calls attention, and the light is used to discover the escape without danger.

At this time I have every moment of the day occupied by my profession, and the many hours of thought and experiment which are spent upon my invention must necessarily be stolen from my much needed rest.

I know by my own symptoms, on its completion, that I need a short relaxation and change of air.

It seems impossible to leave my practice for a day, but, whatever the consequences, I must go.

Burning the candle at both ends is dangerous work, and I have seen its evil effects too often portrayed in others.

I want to get somewhere out of the world, fly to a calm retreat where I shall not be known.

It becomes a perfect puzzle as I rack my brains in search of solitude. All my friends would fête me; I tried some before, under similar circumstances, and found them wanting.

There is really no such word as rest in this hurrying age.

As I ponder the matter, a pile of letters are brought in, and among them the quarterly stereotyped acknowledgment from old Mrs. Domvery.

A sudden inspiration! Why not go there? She is too old to bother me, and immense attraction—no chance of meeting friends or acquaintances! Besides, I shall at the same time be doing what I have often felt was a duty shirked. So I write at once, saying I shall be glad to come and stay for a day or two. If she cannot put me up, will she get me a bed at the inn, which I conclude the village, or small town, boasts of?

Mrs. Domvery replies she will be pleased to see me, and will give me a bed.

The warmth of the invitation is not marked, but that I tell myself is natural from her failing years, and I feel quite glad that something has prompted me to go. I shall now be able to judge for myself how long before the hospital is likely to be enriched.

It is a wearisome journey to the little town of Rackmouth, and I don't arrive till late in the evening. I am not best pleased on emerging from the train with my bag, to find myself evidently a centre of attraction to the few people on the platform. They all appear to notice me, following my movements with curious eyes, and whispering among themselves. "That silly old lady," I think to myself, "has been boasting of her visitor, and the yokels are gaping at the great London doctor."

Of all things, that is to me the most distasteful!

Notwithstanding this, however, no one seems inclined to give me a hand with my bag, and I have the uncomfortable sensation of all the little assembled party following me to the station door. Each pushes the other, evidently striving to get in front.

On the country road, looking dismal to a degree in the drizzling rain, stands a ramshackle old fly, while a policeman at the exit, before I can ask if it is my conveyance, steps forward, and inquires if I am for Renole House?

"Yes."

There is something of annoyance in my tone, as I look my questioner up and down. What has it to do with him? He advances, opens the door, and shows me into the cab.

The whole small concourse behave in much the same manner as when some noted criminal is being conveyed from a court to the prison van.

As I am about to step in, the station-master comes forward, and asks for my ticket, saying in an audible voice as he looks at it: "From London!"

I close the door of the fly, when the policeman speaks again.

"As you are for Renole House, sir, perhaps you would give me a lift; I'm going that way."

"Certainly."

The rain is lashing on the windows; I cannot well refuse. I distinctly catch a murmur of approval from the circle of onlookers when he joins me, and am completely mystified as we roll away. I am not in a conversational mood, and gaze out on the dreary road while the policeman is contemplating me.

"It isn't far to Renole House. Been there before, sir?"

"No."

"Is the old lady who's supposed to live there a friend of yours?"

He asks the question most politely. I answer, though I cannot see that it is any business of his:

"Yes. I know Mrs. Domvery well, though I have not seen her for years."

"Nor has anyone else," remarks the man.

From this I gather that the old lady does not go out much now, and intend to drop the subject, but my informant continues:

"No," shaking his head, "and she don't let anyone go in, either."

"Eccentric in her old age," I mentally surmise. "And the police do not like houses they are not allowed to enter. No suppers with the cook, or tips at Christmas time. And Mrs. Domvery is rich!"

The slow, calculating voice breaks again on my ear.

"They'd like to know something about the establishment, if so be you should feel disposed to tell them."

It dawns on me suddenly as I listen that the "arm of the law" is not making conversation, but speaking with a purpose. I become interested at once, and resolve to get at the bottom of his meaning.

"Explain yourself, my man," I say briefly. "What is it you want to know?"

"Well, just this, sir. The Inspector hearin', as all the town did, that our fly was ordered to fetch someone from the station to Renole House, where nobody hadn't been for years, he says to me: 'Go and see who it is, and report here. If so be it's a gentleman, try and get him to call on me before he goes back from the town.' So I made so bold as to ride up with you, sir. If you wouldn't mind looking in at the police station, which we pass, I shall get some credit for it."

I must own I feel amused as well as perplexed, and readily assent, giving instructions to the driver.

"There's been a rare talk about who was comin' to-night," proceeds the man; "lots of them went to the station to see. Now that I've driven away with you, they'll be after me like anything to know what's up."

Meeting with no response, he mildly remarks, that if I could tell him anything to calm the public excitement he should esteem it a favour.

"Tell them to mind their own business," I reply, at which the officer subsides, and almost immediately the cab pulls up at the police station. I am certainly a trifle curious as I alight.

The Inspector profusely apologises for the action of his subordinate in troubling me to call so late at night. He orders the officious policeman to retire, and explains that for the last three or four years no one has been allowed in the precincts of Renole House.

The housekeeper and her husband take everything in at the wicket gate. They seem respectable people, and tell everyone the seclusion is an eccentricity of the old lady.

"It does not sound like Mrs. Domvery," I think, though I do not say so to the Inspector.

"If," he continues, "on your return, you would call and give us any information you think necessary, we should be very glad."

I thank him for the interest he takes, and promise to look in again if there is any occasion to do so.

The Inspector shows me to my fly politely, and, pointing out the house some few hundred yards down the road, bids me good-night.

I hardly know what to think as the horse moves on.

There is not much time for contemplation, however, before I arrive at Mrs. Domvery's home.

The memory of the dear old man comes back with a rush, and I feel glad at last to have sought out his lonely widow. She must have changed since the London days, when it was her greatest joy to gather young people around her, and hear their fresh voices and merry laughter.

I find myself outside an ordinary house, such as one sees in most country towns, entirely surrounded by high walls.

The wicket gate opens as my fly draws up, and I am met by the housekeeper and an old man-servant, who takes my bag.

I shall never forget the impression those two people make upon me, as the gate closes quickly behind us.

Their features are strangely similar, both grotesque in their ugliness, though the man's expression strikes me the most forcibly.

He is thin, horribly shrunken, yet not with the emaciation that arises from hunger. He is well dressed and I should imagine he feeds well, and drinks better, for all the blood from his white face seems to have settled in his hooked nose. I fancy it grows even more scarlet as I look, but this is only imagination. His hands tremble, I presume from the same cause, though his lips smile as if in friendly welcome.

The hall is lit by a shaded lamp, that throws queer shadows upon the walls. There is nothing "homey" or snug in the interior of Renole House. The intense quiet is almost depressing, our footsteps seem to creak with aggressive noise, and I have the feeling that to speak above a whisper would be breaking one of the Commandments.

The housekeeper, who in figure is a contrast to the man, being fat and bloated, addresses me in a hoarse undertone, curtseying low.

"Mrs. Domvery wishes me to apologise, sir, for going to bed; but it being her custom to sleep early a nights, and late of a mornin', and only risin' in the midday, she 'adn't the strength to sit up to receive you. She 'opes you will excuse 'er, and make a good supper."

Having delivered herself of this message, she leads the way to the dining-room, where I follow Mrs. Domvery's directions, and do ample justice to a so'id meal.

The fat woman can cook at any rate, and before retiring I regard her with more lenient eyes.

After all, what can one expect of servants, who have only one almost bedridden old lady over them, and she pro'ably already in her dotage?

No wonder, shut up in this deadly house, they take to drink as their natural consoler.

I feel good-natured and happy as I sit over my smoke and wine, smiling at the remembrance of the inquisitive inspector.

It speaks well for this gruesome couple that they do not break Mrs. Domvery's orders, and feast the villagers on her fare, holding high revels in the kitchen.

At last, weary after my journey, I touch the bell, and ask the old man to show me to my room; I am quite ready for bed, and the still hush which oppressed me on entering now seems restfully quiet to my overworked brain. I feel I have done well to come to Renole House.

He lights a guttering candle, carrying it in one shaking hand, and precedes me up a winding flight of stairs.

He treads gently, with cat-like fall.

"We mustn't wake the missus," he whispers; "she sleeps that light."

I follow on tip-toe, recalling the old days when I crept past the nursery as a child, murmuring that familiar rhyme:

Don't make a noise, or else you'll wake the baby!

while visions more recent of coming home late after a students' dinner flit through my mind.

The room into which he shows me is old-fashioned and lugubrious. Some quaint figures hang pictured on the walls in shabby frames, while the bed decorations are of a dull, seedy-looking brown, and remind me of deceased ancestors.

But what do I care if the furniture is mouldy and the upholstering moth-eaten? As long as the sheets are not damp and the bed is comfortable I am well satisfied. There is novelty in the old-world air of everything which pleases my modern soul.

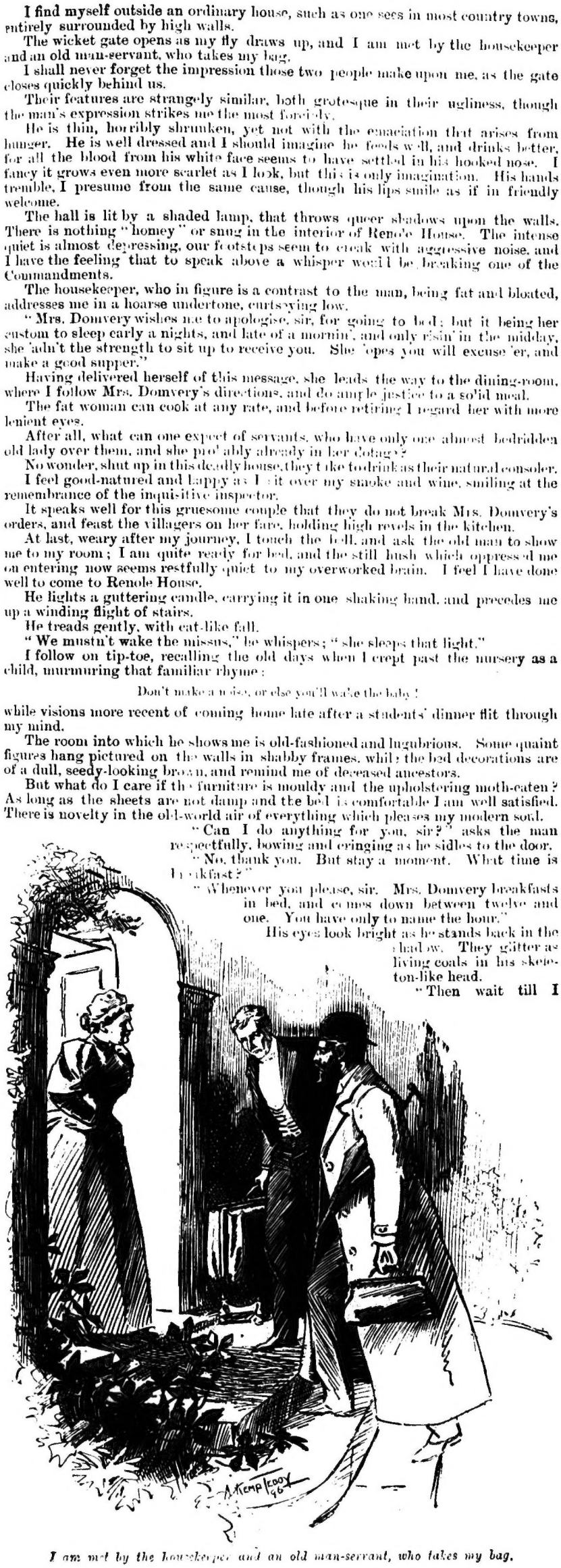
"Can I do anything for you, sir?" asks the man respectfully, bowing and cringing as he sidles to the door.

"No, thank you. But stay a moment. What time is breakfast?"

"Whenever you please, sir. Mrs. Domvery breakfasts in bed, and comes down between twelve and one. You have only to name the hour."

His eyes look bright as he stands back in the shadow. They glitter as living coals in his skeleton-like head.

"Then wait till I



I am met by the housekeeper and an old man-servant, who takes my bag.

ring," I say, feeling it is just a chance whether I sleep late or wake early from sheer force of habit.

He retires as stealthily as he came, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

I am glad he has gone, and prefer to unpack my own things. As I do so, I draw from my bag the little "tell-tale." To-morrow I will show it to the old lady. I glance round surprised at seeing there is gas here, though not lighted. Plenty of candles are burning, but they all gutter, and there is a dim ghostly appearance about them. I prefer a bright flaring jet in such a room! I try to light the burners, but there is no gas on.

"Turned off evidently for safety," I think, "at the meter."

I feel as if a breath of air would be good among my musty surroundings, and fling open the window to get a sight of Mrs. Domvery's garden by moonlight. But it will not stay, the cords are evidently broken. Well, no matter, there isn't a moon, and the rain still falls pitilessly upon the verandah below.

I hold the sash a moment, though the night is uninviting. I always like to see a way out in case of fire, and look down on the roof beneath.

"No difficulty here!" I say, as I shut the window gently, and stretch my weary limbs on the comfortable feather mattress under the brown hangings.

Rest! that is what I have come for. I am likely to find it in this sleepy little place, far from the bustling world. So I close my eyes, and slumber, soft, dreamy, and delicious, steals over me. How long it is since I fell asleep I cannot say, but I fancy I hear the night bell in Harley Street. My man I know will answer it, and call me if necessary.

He precedes me up a winding flight of stairs.

The bell, however, does not stop.

"Confound the servant!" I think in my dreams.

A sudden rush of life flows into my weary brain. I stir uneasily, and then find myself sitting up in bed with the electric light in my eyes, and the tiny "tell-tale" bell ringing weirdly.

I left it beside me on the table, and for the moment believe that I am dreaming.

But a second's pause brings back my senses, and with them I notice the undoubted smell of gas.

In a moment I seize my machine, stop the bell, and with the aid of the electric light discover, to my amazement, a large rent in the gas-pipe close to the floor, where it goes up to the burners.

It is the work of a second to pinch the leaden pipe together with the nippers I keep for the purpose by the "tell-tale" and seal it securely with soap. Then to the window for air! I hasten across the room to let out the unpleasant smell. Had I shut the shutters?

Surely not! I never do such a thing in my bedroom.

My fingers fumble; I am utterly bewildered, for fastened they *are* securely, nor can I open them, or see any catch, though my little electric light shines brightly.

I stagger back, and stare at them stupidly. It is so utterly incomprehensible.

My next thought is the door. A turn of the handle, a tug, a wrench; but neither will that move, or give way to my frantic efforts. I bring my bright light closer, grasped in a hand which, I am glad to say, does not falter, though the situation is growing grave. One look convinces me—there are no fastenings within! It is tightly secured from the *outside*!

A horrible chilling realisation flashes across me.

Is it possible there can be foul play?

A dozen incidents crowd into my brain—my arrival at the station, the interview with the police, and the gossip I had listened to heedlessly enough then; added to these—the non-appearance of Mrs. Domvery upon my arrival, and the evil glitter in that terrible old man's eyes, as he retired with a sinister smile. He and his wife have formed these vile plans—plotted together to destroy me! Each fresh thought confirms my suspicions. I quiver with rage, maddened by this dastardly scheme—anger rather than fear taking possession of me. I rush again at the door, and with Herculean strength try to tear it open. I break my nails in the fruitless effort till the blood runs down on my palms, and the cold drops stand out on my forehead. Then back to the shutters with no better result.

My next discovery entirely convinces me, the chimney is carefully closed at the top of the grate. What further evidence do I need? It stares me in the face, this is murder—premeditated. Mercifully no panic seizes me. In the most terrible moments we are often composed, uncannily cool. It is as if the sensitive faculties of our nature suddenly stand still, quelled by stronger powers, brought of necessity into action. Pulling myself together, with what seems at the moment no great effort, I calmly sit down to consider what is best to do.

I banish at once any idea of alarming the house, which could only show my would-be assassins that their fell purpose has failed, and spur them on to more devilish attempts. Absolute quiet is my best chance, the safest line to take. They will probably come when they think I am suffocated—that cadaverous old man and his accomplice. The shutters must be opened and the gas burners turned on before they call the police to witness how I met my end. The idea is elaborate. They are wise and well skilled in wrong doing.

I dress myself quickly, arranging my hair in my usual way. It certainly makes a very fair imitation.

I turn off the little bright light, and take up my position behind the door, so that the person who first enters

I stand there for what

count, grow gradually into hours, yet I never move from my post in the dark corner, grasping my weapon.

Will the long drawn-out suspense never end? I confess in this midnight watch my thoughts are both bloodthirsty and revengeful. I feel like a tiger waiting to spring. I pant to get at my enemies, who have trapped me in the dark. A hand to hand struggle holds no ghostly terrors for me. These silent screws and the rushing out of noiseless gas are coward's weapons and make my soul burn!

What is that gleam of light at the window? Something is moving! Can it be possible they are going to creep in that way?

I slip gently across the room to see the shutters slowly opening, which had resisted all my efforts. They fold back while I watch as if by magic. My natural inclination at this strange occurrence is to hasten forward and see how the miracle is worked. But instinct whispers cautiously: "Hold back! Take advantage of your opportunity and escape without inquiry!"

I raise the window gently and peer out. A ray of morning light reveals the quaint old garden, still and deserted. There is no one below.

I breathe in the soft air, which speaks of freedom and life. Noiselessly I creep upon the sill like a cat, letting the window close behind me, and drop from the verandah to the ground. No wonder I look round sharply for a foe, feeling as if the very shadows must be peopled by devils. But all is quiet, and I make for the wicket gate unpursued, and let myself out into the road. How dreary and uninteresting it seemed last night! Now the very mud that soaks my boots is sweet.

What is that gleam of light at the window? Something is moving!

A few minutes and I am again at the police station. A sleepy man, not my embryo detective of last night, answers my summons, informs me the Inspector is in bed, and goes to rouse him.

He leaves me under the wing of a plain clothes gentleman, who, I gather, is not in the force, but a detective come to Rackmouth on business.

The Inspector, intensely excited at hearing of my arrival so early in the morning, appears almost immediately. There is an expectant look in his eyes, which grow larger and rounder as I unfold my tale.

The detective also listens eagerly, and his ears literally prick up.

"I have it!" he exclaims, his sharp face glowing with energy, "let the gentleman disguise himself, and go back to the house with me. We shall represent two gentlemen come for the eminent doctor, and insist on seeing him at once. In the meanwhile you," addressing the Inspector, "must guard the place outside with some of your men, who should be concealed. You can enter the garden, as having shown us the way from the station. There whistle for assistance if necessary."

The London detective's tone is decided, and pleases me. I see at once he knows what he is about. He arranges a disguise for me which I promptly adopt, and in less time than it takes to tell, we are off to Renole House.

On the way my wary guide cautions me to be absolutely silent, as my voice may be recognised. I promise to keep in the background, and act entirely on his instructions. Remembering how I expect my patients to rely implicitly upon me, I in my turn place the same confidence in this man, whose special business it is.

The Inspector assures me I can do this with confidence, as our companion is one of the first detectives in London.

"What would you do under the circumstances, sir?" he asks, as we approach the house.

His question is mere idle curiosity, since already his plans are cut and dried.

"Seize them all, and hand them over to the police!" I reply.

He cackles a little amused laugh.

"That would ruin everything," he retorts in a whisper. "They have simply to say they know nothing about it, and then what evidence can be brought against them? Remember, there is no gas in the room, and the doors and shutters are probably above suspicion. Everything is removed by now, you may be sure."

I see the force of his argument, and only wonder what the plan of action will be.

We are at the gate, and I hear the bell peal with a keen sensation of excitement.

At first it is not answered, and we ring two or three times, before the pinched, red-nosed old man of last night appears.

In the morning light his lurid cheeks look more wan and shrunken than when last I saw him. The cadaverous face darkens; he is shaking slightly as if with cold.

"Lor, how you startled me!" he begins in an aggrieved tone. "Whatever can you want this time in the morning? It's a nice hour to be callin' a body out of bed, and wakin' a respectable household."

"We have come for Dr. Blaine," says the detective, "and the Inspector guided us to the house. It is imperative that we see him at once—a matter of life and death. We came by a special train from London to fetch him back."

The old man scowls ominously, yet has no option but to open the gate. We enter hurriedly, leaving the police sergeant in the garden.

"Dr. Blaine is, of course, asleep," grumbles the ancient retainer.

"Take us to his room," says the detective a trifle sharply. "There is no time to waste."

As we stand in the dim hall, grey shadows of dawn falling upon the familiar bjects I remember plainly from last night, a chill shudder runs through my veins. gloomy the place looks. What a deathly stillness reigns.

"his way," mutters the old man, mounting the creaking stairs slowly, as if ng every step.

v, we must have ", pretending to stumble in the

ng if possible a shade arlet. But my spokes-

"I have had sight," he declares, "fetch me one at once," speaking authoritatively.

Our guide fumbles about, but can find no matches. He dares not take a light, fearing to be blown up by an inevitable explosion of gas.

A look from the detective shows me he has made a point.

"Never m'n t then," he says, as we follow the shrunken figure to my door.

The detective pauses in front of the servant, saying: "don't startle him!" and taking the handle taps lightly.

No answer.

A louder knock, but still without reply.

"Don't let the old man out of your sight!" This is a hurried whisper under cover of a fresh rap; I catch it, and determine to obey.

"Dr. Blaine!" calls the detective, "may we come in?" A pause. "Dr. Blaine! He sleeps soundly, we must wake him."

He opens the door gently, but instantly bangs it to, nearly knocking us both over.

"Good Heavens! the room is full of gas!" he cries. "Bring some water, quick! quick!"

The old man rushes down the passage with me at his coat-tails, and fetches a jug from the bathroom.

"Clever actor that!" think I as we return to the now agitated detective, who dips his handkerchief into the water.

"I can get to the window with this over my nose," he declares; "you go and fetch the police."

Sharp as lightning I turn the old servant round, and together we hurry away in search of the Inspector.

On our return the detective is back in the passage gasping conspicuously.

"I opened the window," he tells us, "but had to prop it up, and nearly got suffocated in consequence. I think, however, by now the room will be safe, and I and the sergeant can go in. You two remain outside."

The old man is professing utter consternation, wringing his hands, and muttering prayers, but shows no desire to enter the chamber of death.

I never let him get a yard from me, and keep my eyes fixed upon his scared face, noting every changing expression.

In due course the detective and Inspector return with long countenances, and inform us gravely that Dr. Blaine is dead. Surely the trembling servant, who smites his breast murmuring: "Poor gentleman, poor gentleman!" must wonder we do not send for a doctor. But my detective has not overlooked this. He remarks that he himself is a medical man, and nothing can be done to restore the life that has fled. Dr. Blaine is past all recovery.

How nearly these words were fulfilled! He goes on to say that they have found the escape of gas and stopped it. The matter must now rest with the police.

Evidently the Inspector and the detective have arranged their plan of action together in the room.

The former goes immediately to my "prisoner," asks his name and enters it in a pocket-book.

"I must see everyone in the house," he says, "and no one must leave until this matter is investigated. How many occupants are there?"

"Only my wife and Mrs. Domvery," replies the old man.

The Inspector makes a note of this, and requests to see them.

"Mrs. Domvery will be terribly upset," mutters the quavering voice of her considerate domestic. "My wife sleeps in her room, as her health has been very failing of late."

The hard-hearted Inspector nevertheless insists on their being at once informed.

We follow the man-servant to Mrs. Domvery's door. He taps lightly, and is answered by the housekeeper.

"Some gentlemen wish to see Mrs. Domvery as quickly as possible," he murmurs in a hoarse undertone.

There is a short conversation, in which the housekeeper deplores her dear mistress being disturbed at this unearthly hour, and then silence again within.

The old man takes up his position outside Mrs. Domvery's door, informing us "she ain't fit to bear the upset," shaking his head solemnly.

"You two stay here and let us know when she is ready," says the detective, addressing the Inspector and the housekeeper's husband. Then turning to me: "Perhaps you would like to come and see the mortal remains of our dear friend, Dr. Blaine?"

I agree with bowed head, and we move away together.

Once more alone with the keen-witted man, I learn the mystery of the past night.

"See," he explains, "how your door was fastened."

I look, but can discover no sign of screws or bolts without.

He then draws my attention to two circles

"Come nearer! and look on the face of the man you murdered

of about half an inch diameter in the floor beneath the door when shut.

"Undoubtedly," he says, "there are two holes to correspond in the woodwork at the bottom of the door. These circles are iron rods which could be easily raised a few inches into the holes of the door. No more secure fastening is possible, and

sily let down again afterwards. We shall find it all out presently, but do not let show any suspicion of foul play yet. The chimney stoppage is of course bsolutely simple. I can see that those shutters work on a pivot like railway level rossing gates, to be opened from the signal-box. They are caught in the same ay as these gates, very ingenious and effective. You can see this arrangement any day at Mortlake Station; certainly there must be some one in this job ith mechanical talent. We shall soon catch the gentleman, his time will come. robably he is concealed in the house."

"What shall we do next?" I ask.

"Interview old Mrs. Domvery first, and in her room keep the silence you have far admirably maintained. You must let me know by some sign whether the erson we see is actually herself!"

"Good gracious!" I cry, "you do not think they have also murdered my old friend?"

"That remains to be seen," the detective answers. "If it is her, place your right hand on your head, if not, put them both in your pockets."

I am getting deeply interested, but he will divulge no further plans at present. A knock comes at the door, and the Inspector announces that Mrs. Domvery will see us. I must own my heart beats faster as we enter her room. In the bed lies an apparently feeble old woman. Her night cap and wraps almost entirely cover her up. She is crying and rocking herself to and fro, a handkerchief before her eyes.

The housekeeper stands beside her also greatly agitated, and speaks reproachfully.

"She's that upset, poor dear lady, it's enough to cost her her life!"

For the moment I cannot discern the invalid's features.

The detective expresses his sorrow at the tragic accident, and assures the old lady that she shall be as little disturbed by it as possible.

She thanks him in a quavering voice.

I have difficulty in getting a glimpse of her face.

Finally, however, I obtain a view, just as she speaks.

The detective glances across at me quickly; instantly both my hands find their way into my pockets. There is no doubt about it—the person in the bed is certainly *not* Mrs. Domvery!

It is a great shock to me, but still I cling to the penance of silence.

The detective then says the Inspector must speak with Mrs. Domvery, and, escorting me to the door, whispers:

"Send him in, and take his place with the old man. I will tell the housekeeper to go out, and don't you lose sight of either of them till I join you."

The woman protests that it will kill Mrs. Domvery to be left a moment without her; but I close the door as the Inspector enters, and discreetly move husband and wife down the passage.

I feel they must think I am dumb, as I never speak, and only listen to their lamentations.

The time seems long before the detective reappears, putting on an air of intense excitement.

"The Inspector," he says hurriedly to the couple, "wishes you both to see the corpse and identify it."

His words amaze me! What can he be going to do? Surely this last act will spoil everything. Still I pin my faith to him, and hold my peace?

A look of dread and unspeakable horror creeps over the culprits' faces. They do not appreciate the idea of seeing their victim.

But the detective is firm, and they cannot refuse, so we four march with bated breath into my terrible room. All the details of the night rise up before me again, as I stand by these two fiends, who stare at the fatal bed, and shiver. They do not see him silently lock the door, and take the key.

He moves gently towards the covered body, but does not remove the sheet.

He looks first at those two guilty ones, with the air of a man deeply distressed.

"I know," he begins, speaking impressively, "that the sight of the sudden and terrible change in one who only last night was hale and hearty must of necessity be painful to you. Death has disguised none of its horrors in the countenance I am about to reveal. We are in the presence of life's grim enemy, and I feel to a certain extent bound to prepare you for an awful and ghastly shock."

The old man edges closer to his stout wife, his jaw seems to drop, while she backs against the wall as if needing its support. The detective eyes them and seems satisfied.

"Come nearer!" he cries, "and" (with a dramatic air) "look on the face of the man you *murdered!*"

A wild exclamation of astonishment and terror breaks from their trembling lips, followed by a weak attempt at indignation. But the old man's knees are knocking together, while the woman's eyes start from her head fixed and bloodshot.

The detective proceeds:

"It is useless for you to deny it. Your accomplice in Mrs. Domvery's bed has confessed all to save his own neck—how you schemed to take this man's life by your artful arrangements. You secured the door, the shutters, and chimney," pointing to them as he speaks, and explaining the exact mechanism. "Then you turned on the gas to escape through that rent in the pipe."

As he recounts every detail, which they believe he could only have obtained from their accomplice, and being unnerved by the convicting situation, they collapse utterly and beg for mercy.

The two criminals try to throw the entire blame on Mrs. Domvery's impersonator, and thereby the detective obtains all the information which he requires concerning him.

It is with difficulty I restrain myself from slapping my skilful friend on the back and shouting "Bravo!" But I control myself until we are again alone.

"How," I ask excitedly, "did you and the Inspector get the third accomplice to confess?"

He smiles cynically.

"That was merely a game of 'bluff' which succeeded admirably. We asked him *nothing*. There will be no difficulty now in repeating the dose with him."

A repetition is eminently successful, and the three are convicted from their own mouths.

Ten Pounds = = = = Will be given to the sender of the most appropriate words to accompany the set of pictures published below. Attempts, marked "Appropriate," to reach these offices on or before Tuesday, December 29th.

THE MARBLE HEART

By Nellie K. Blissett.

I.

WHEN I succeeded to the titles and estates of my uncle, the Prinz von Taxel, my first feeling was one of distaste and disgust at the position into which I was brought, and for which I had certainly never been intended. All my life had been lived as an artist and a wanderer, and on the death of my cousin, Eberhard von Taxel, I had reflected that, though the title must descend as a matter of course to me, the estates and the great Schloss might, and would, be willed to my cousin Netta. It was certainly under the impression that this had been done that I attended my uncle's funeral; and I have never experienced a more unpleasant shock than I did when I discovered that upon me, Eberhard Almerius von Taxel, devolved the burden of all my ancestral estates.

But worse was to follow. My uncle, in his will, pointed clearly to the advisability of a marriage between myself and my cousin Netta. Now Netta was, and is, a very excellent girl, and I have no doubt she will make somebody a very excellent wife, but that somebody will not be myself. I deeply regret that my uncle, the late Prinz, thought it necessary to include either me, or the clause concerning Netta, in his will, but for that I am not responsible. I cannot very well be expected to marry Netta, for the sufficiently slight reason that her father objected, to her cost, to the separation of the title and estates of Taxel.

However, as I shall not marry Netta, nor anyone else, that matter is not worth discussion. Sufficient to say that I went down to the Schloss von Taxel after my aunt and cousin had vacated it, with no good grace; and, dreading the loneliness of the great castle, I induced my friend Max Reissiger to accompany me.

The Schloss is a picturesque old building, dating, in parts, from the seventh century. It has a keep, a haunted tower, a moat, dungeons, and a picture gallery, all of a kind to fling archæologists and antiquarians into raptures, and entirely wasted upon me. I have never cared for old walls save for sketching purposes, and object to haunted towers when I can get civilisation and electric light. The only thing which I looked forward to overhauling with any pleasure was the library; and as this was one of the oldest in the country, and contained some very celebrated works, I thought it best to examine its contents as soon as possible.

So, on the day after my arrival, I dispatched Max, who was also an artist, and a very clever artist too, into the neighbouring forest to sketch, and promised myself a long afternoon in the library. The first thing to be done was to get the key, and to accomplish this I had to pass through one of the state bedrooms. It was a great dark room with huge hanging cupboards, and a curiosity as to the contents of these cupboards seized me, so that I opened one. Within it, ranged on pegs, hung women's dresses—strange old robes with faded colours and tarnished embroideries. They were evidently very ancient and marvellously preserved, but there was something so ghostly in the spectacle of these old-world garments whose wearers would never put them on again, that I shut the cupboard hastily and went down into the library.

Here, indeed, was a sight to gladden the eyes of any book-lover. Rare old editions, priceless manuscripts, curious brown folios, and missals bound in gold and garnished with jewels, were crowded one on the other. All were in confusion and, considering their value, marvellously ill-kept. I had just been investigating a big box of volumes which was placed in the window recess, when, on glancing round, I noticed in one corner of the room a quaint old iron chest, banded and locked with curiously wrought brass, and, knowing nothing of its existence, proceeded to open it. The lid was very heavy, and as for the box itself, it was impossible to move it, which surprised me, for it was quite empty. The interior was lined with brass, showing vine leaves in high relief, and, the better to examine them, I placed a hand on the bottom of the chest and leant rather heavily on it. To my astonishment, I felt something move, and, on shaking the lining, found that I had touched a spring, and that the bottom of the box could be lifted out.

I removed the brass lining, and discovered a little recess beneath it. In this recess was a brown leather volume with silver clasps. I took it to the light and opened it, and found its contents to be written on thin parchment, and, contrary to the custom with the rest of the family manuscripts, in old German. I read a few lines—with difficulty, for the character was small and the style unfamiliar—and gradually there dawned upon me the stupendous fact that I was reading nothing less than the lost manuscripts of Almerius the Alchemist, Prinz von Taxel.

Almerius the Alchemist is, perhaps, the most interesting figure in the history of Taxel. He reigned early in the twelfth century, and being a very clever man, with opinions in advance of his time, naturally had the reputation of being in league with the Devil. In the ordinary manuscripts of the house, he is stated to have written a history of the Princes of Taxel, which history had been lost for centuries, that is to say from the time of the writer's death until the moment when I discovered the secret of the removable lining of the chest. This history had always been regarded as a very precious work, and its loss as a serious family calamity, for Almerius had, according to tradition, carried the race of Taxel back farther than any later comer could conceive, and half the secrets of the name were said to be contained in his book. Where he had put the work, or whether he had destroyed it, no one knew; but as his own death was a mystery, so was the fate of his writings. For tradition stated that one night Almerius the Alchemist entered the library and there bolted himself in as was his wont. Next morning the room was still fast closed, and as no answer was returned to the cries of his frightened servants, the door had to be broken down. Then the library was found to be untenanted—there was no sign of disorder anywhere, and the windows were all carefully fastened on the inner side.

It was impossible that anyone could have left the room, yet Almerius was unquestionably gone, and was never heard of again. His nephew succeeded him—he had never married, no respectable *demoiselle* being brave enough to undertake such a husband—and it was generally held that his fate was no pleasanter than, in consideration of his character, it ought to have been; in other words, that he had sold himself to the Devil, and the Devil had claimed his bargain.

But here were undoubtedly the lost MSS. of Almerius. I examined the book carefully and counted the pages; there were one hundred and eighty of them, closely written, and all fastened together; and in addition about twenty loose leaves written in the same character, and bearing upon the first page the title of "The Marble Heart." This title attracted my attention, and I proceeded to read the document there and then.

I took it to the light and opened it.

It began with a curious dissertation on the different modes of embalming, which, being neither savoury nor particularly interesting, I will omit. Almerius had evidently studied the subject deeply, and had apparently been strongly attracted by it. Having enumerated the various processes of the art practised by the Egyptians, he mentioned that in the end of the sixth century an Italian physician discovered a method by which the bodies embalmed became of the consistency of marble. So complete was the process that its effects would last for centuries, but there was no instance given of its having ever been tried except by the physician himself "on small animals by way of experiment." Almerius went on to moralise upon the fact that people "having petted and pampered their vile bodies during life, care very little what afterwards becomes

of them," and then remarked that an interesting problem as to the use of this process was at that moment occupying his own mind. In tracing out the history of the house of Taxel he had discovered that "Eberhard, Prinz von Taxel, in the middle of the seventh century, had an only daughter, named Saphyria, of great beauty, and that this daughter died young, whereupon Eberhard mourned most lamentably, and sent for embalmers out of the South to method known to few." This Saphyria had been buried under the castle in some place of which history had kept no record, but Almerius expressed a belief that it was "under the site of this room (the library), this being the oldest in the Schloss, and dating from the seventh century, as I have reason to think." What reason he did not state, and as this supposition put back the building of the Schloss for two clear centuries, I hardly believed in his theory; but he went on to say that the tomb of Saphyria was very rich and beautiful and placed in a subterranean chapel by itself and sealed up; "and upon the entry to this chapel was placed a Marble Heart, that it should be a memorial of her, and of the love which her father, the Prinz Eberhard von Taxel, bore unto her." The Alchemist seemed to have little doubt but that this method of embalming "after the fashion of the South, a very rare method known to few," was the process discovered by the Italian physician, and also that the Marble Heart and the tomb of Saphyria still existed, and he expressed an intention of trying to discover it and testing the truth of the story.

The remaining loose pages were devoted to the details of his proposed search. For some time he appears to have been unable to find any trace of the Marble Heart, and began almost to give up hope of ever tracing it at all. Then one day he wrote an excited entry, which, translated from the quaint German character, ran much as follows:

"I have discovered the Marble Heart, and that in the place whereof I have spoken—I mean under this room. In the corner, on the left-hand side, nearest the fireplace is a loose plank, which can be removed at will, and when it is removed, the other planks are cut round, and can be lifted up so that there is space for one man to go down by a narrow stairway into the vaults beneath the Castle, where, ten paces from the stair-foot, lies the Marble Heart. I have taken account already of these things, and to-night I shall go down and remove the Marble Heart, and descend into the tomb. In this wise shall I descend; I shall draw my writing chest with the false bottom over to the place where the planks are cut, and I shall take out the planks and put them in the bottom of the box. Then I shall put my books as I have put them before, and descend, dragging the box over the hole in the floor so that no man shall find my whereabouts—for I may be away some hours. Then I shall go to the tomb and examine the work of the Italian embalmers; for this is a wonderful thing, and it is held that if a man were to be embalmed alive so he should awake, whole and sound, after centuries, yea, even should he so remain until the Judgment Day—at which time may all good Christians intercede for the soul of me, Almerius von Taxel."

So ended the MS. It was almost as if in writing the last sentence the Alchemist had guessed that the time would soon come when he would need the intercession of "all good Christians."

Of course, I had now no doubt in my mind as to the fate of my far-off ancestor; he had descended to the tomb, and had either been suffocated, attacked by sudden illness, or else had simply failed to regain his passage and starved to death under the very feet of his friends and servants. It was a dreadful thing to contemplate, but not more strange than many other things that occurred in those days. At any rate the fact remained that on that night—it corresponded with the date of his disappearance as given in the Taxel MS.—he had gone into the library, and in the morning he had disappeared, and that he could have left the room neither by the door nor the windows. Therefore, he must have gone down under his writing-chest and never come up again.

I put the leather-bound volume carefully away and examined the bottom of the chest. The whole of the lining, I found, lifted out, and beneath was no sign of planks or anything else, but a dark gap into the vaults beneath. I could not examine further then, for I heard Max, returned from his expedition, calling me in the corridor. I hurriedly shut the chest, unlocked the library door, and found him outside with a canvas in his hand.

"Well," he said, in some surprise, "you've never been book-dusting ever since I left? You'd better have come with me. I've had the oddest adventure. I sat down to paint that old oak with the hawk's nest, and this came into my head. I positively *couldn't* paint the tree. I really felt as if someone were *making me* paint this. How do you like it?"

He held out a canvas showing an unfinished sketch of a girl's head. She was looking back over her shoulder, and a long veil was wound in her hair and floated back from her face. Her features, though but indistinctly seen, were perfect, and there was a curious cold beauty about the colouring of the sketch relieved only by the gold of the coil of hair and the blue embroidery which was just suggested by the edge of the veil.

"It is beautiful," I said; "but you must have recalled it from something else."

He shook his head.

"I never saw anything like it in my life, and I never thought of it before. No," and he laughed uneasily, "there's something supernatural in your neighbourhood here, Eberhard. You've got a ghost somewhere, I suppose?"

"Lots," I said carelessly. And then I changed the subject and we went down to dinner. But I did not half like the idea of that adventure in the forest.

II.

NEXT morning nothing would suit Max but an expedition to the scene of his adventure, as he still persisted in terming it. We went out into the forest and reached the oak with the hawk's nest—a spot commanding a fine view of the Schloss from the south. Max had a block and some water-colours, and as we sat under the tree he proposed that I should sketch the place.

"It's such an imposing-looking building," he said. "I can't think why you don't care more about it; but you always were an odd sort of fellow, you know, Eberhard."

This opinion of myself rather surprised me, and I turned to him.

"Why odd?" I asked.

He hesitated.

"Oh, I don't know—you were. They always said——" and he hesitated.

"Who were 'they,' and what was it they said?"

"Different people. Everyone seemed to think you—well, eccentric."

I said nothing, but commenced my sketch.

"You—you don't mind what I said?" asked Max presently.

"Not a bit. I probably am eccentric."

"Your uncle——"

"Oh, he was mad," I said frankly. "Of course, for the honour of the family, he was always considered sane—and he was sane when he did the most idiotic deed of his life, that is to say, made his will. But there were times, especially in his later years, when he was quite mad. There is a strain of insanity in the family."

"How very unpleasant for you," murmured Max thoughtfully.

I laughed.

"I never think about it—it seems quite natural. The Von Taxels are distinguished either for their sense, or for their madness, or for—you know about Almerius the Alchemist?"

"He sold himself to the Devil?"

A curious rumbling sound as of distant thunder made me pause before I answered.

"Yes. Was that thunder?"

"I didn't hear it. The sky is quite clear. Almerius vanished, didn't he?"

"Yes; and I have just discovered——"

The same strange noise again interrupted me.

"What have you discovered? Why did you stop?"

"I thought I heard something. I have just discovered the lost——"

Here a tremendous crash burst across the sky, completely drowning my voice.

"This is very serious," I said, when I could make myself heard. "There is a storm coming up. We had better get back to the Schloss."

Max was looking at me in a puzzled way.

"What's the matter with you this morning, Eberhard? There is no noise—no storm. What did you hear?"

It was my turn to look astonished.

"You mean to say you heard nothing?"

"Nothing at all."

I relapsed into silence and resumed my work. It was clear to me that I had better not mention Almerius the Alchemist and my discovery.

Max lay on the grass gazing up into the branches above him. Presently he came and looked over my shoulder.

"Do you like it?"

He said nothing for a moment. I looked up to find his eyes fixed on me with a sort of horror.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed in a strange voice. "You have painted *her*, too!"

I turned rapidly to my sketch. Perhaps I had not been attending very much to it—perhaps I had been absorbed in the curious disturbance which had prevented my speech about Almerius, but the fact remained that I had not painted the Schloss von Taxel, but a woman's face, looking sideways from the paper.

"It's very odd!" I said foolishly.

Max grunted indignantly.

"Odd! It's more than odd. It's the same face I painted yesterday."

I examined it more closely, and I found his words were true—the face was the same. I put the brushes away and got up.

"We will go home," I said. "You're right, Max—it's more than odd."

"Good Heavens! you have pain'ed her, too!"

III.

FOR about a week nothing of any importance took place at Taxel. We did no more sketching, and I thought little of the mysterious outcome of my intended picture of the Schloss, but it must not be imagined that I had forgotten it, nor the discovery of the lost manuscripts, and the fate of Almerius the Alchemist. I was anxious, and yet half reluctant, to test the truth of his story of the Marble Heart, but there were great difficulties in the way of any investigation of the vaults. To begin with, I had been very strangely prevented from telling the story to Max. I suppose I am superstitious, but after that day under the oak I never dreamt of attempting another explanation; and the thing would be difficult to accomplish alone, taking into account the mysterious disappearance of Almerius, for I had no intention of following in his footsteps.

Yet the idea of an expedition in search of the Marble Heart held for me an extraordinary fascination; it haunted me by night and absorbed my attention by day. Max, too, seemed strangely absent and silent, and wore a curiously abstracted expression on a face generally remarkable for careless good-humour. I wondered a good deal at the mood which had come over him, but I did not care to seek its cause.

So one night, having made such preparations as I could without attracting attention, I went up to my room, firmly determined that by the morning I would have solved the problem which had troubled Almerius, and have discovered, or at least disproved, the existence of the Marble Heart. I waited until the great Schloss was silent, and then stole from my room, locked the door, and pocketed the key, and made a noiseless descent to the library. Here I secured door and windows, and proceeded to open the false bottom of the writing-chest of Almerius.

The Alchemist must have been smaller of limb than I, for it cost me some trouble to squeeze through the opening on to the narrow flight of steps leading to the darkness beneath. Having shut the lid of the chest and slung my lantern round my neck, I descended carefully into the vaults.

They were vast and terribly silent—great spaces of breathless gloom which the flickering light of my lantern only made more dark. The air was exceedingly dry and fresh, and I concluded that there must be another entrance besides that in the library. I carefully measured ten paces straight from the foot of the stairs, and then put the lantern down and examined the ground under my feet.

The stone was covered with a thick coating of dust and fine sand. This I brushed on one side, and, taking from my pocket a damp cloth I had brought for the purpose, I rubbed the pavement carefully at the spot which seemed smooth and cut in one block. Gradually, as I rubbed, the outline of this stone became distinct. I brushed away more sand, and found that I was standing on the object of my search—the Marble Heart lay beneath me!

For some moments my unexpected success almost took away my breath. Then I took out such implements as I had been able to bring, and began to prise up the great stone.

It was heavy, but at last I succeeded in lifting it, and pushed it back upon the rough pavement. Before me stretched another flight of steps. I descended by them, noting the curious carvings on the walls, and found myself in a little chamber adorned with rude carvings of saints and strangely fashioned angels. At the farther end of it an opening showed in the wall, through which I passed, and lifting my lantern saw at once that I had reached the tomb of Saphyria.

It was a lofty hall, the roof of which was upheld by gigantic stone figures, the roof itself being painted. At one side was a great stone altar, surmounted by a crucifix, and before it lay a curious brass-bound chest, having a standing lamp at each corner. Beside this, in a chair placed on the steps of the altar, sat the figure of a man.

He was dressed in a dark robe with a leather girdle round the waist. His features were noble, and a long white beard flowed almost to his knees. One hand rested on the arm of the chair, and I noticed that a great opal blazed upon it. At the man's feet lay a lantern, some tools, and a dagger. As to his identity I had no doubt, and a curious dread seized on me. The attitude, the appearance, the dress, were all so life-like, and yet——

A blast of air came down the steps behind me, causing the lantern to flicker. This draught caught the edge of the Alchemist's robe and it crumbled to dust. Slowly, as I looked, the figure of my dead ancestor melted from the chair and collapsed into a little heap of dust on the steps of the altar; and the opal ring, moved from its balance, rolled across the floor to my feet.

Mechanically I took it up and slipped it on to my finger. Then I bent down and examined the brass-bound chest.

It was fastened by loops and bolts on the outside. I undid them carefully and essayed to lift the lid. It was easy to raise it, but I paused before I did so. What should I find?—what had Almerius found? The Princess Saphyria in all her beauty, or a few bones? The secret of the Italian embalmers, or the failure of a charlatan?

I lifted the lid and stood for a moment looking down in stupid astonishment. In the brass coffin, wrapped in rich garments, lay the figure of a girl. Her shining hair stirred in the draught from the door, and I half feared to see her melt away as Almerius had done. But nothing happened. Bending down I touched her cheek—it was cold and hard as marble. And as I gazed at the beautiful cold features I saw that the face that both Max and I had painted under the oak was the face of the Princess Saphyria.

By this time I was altogether past astonishment. This fresh marvel did not affect me. I wanted, more than anything else, to examine the work of the Italian embalmers, and to this end I tried to lift the Princess out of the coffin. To my surprise I found that she was quite light enough to raise, and I took her up and laid her on the floor. Her robes must also have passed through some process for preservation, for they seemed quite strong—the gold embroidery was untarnished, and the precious stones sparkled in the lamp-light. Altogether her aspect was astonishingly life-like, the colour was still on her cheeks and lips, and her flesh looked almost flexible. As she lay there it flashed across my mind what a perfect picture she would make. What if I painted her and gave to the world some memorial of the beauty which science had so wonderfully preserved? The idea seemed a good one, but I certainly could not paint in the vault. The Princess must be removed to my studio, and it would be a matter of no great difficulty, considering the hour, to get her there without discovery. When there I could always turn the key on her.

So I took the dead Saphyria in my arms and slowly retraced my steps to the library. I had some trouble to get her through the bottom of the writing chest of Almerius; but, this accomplished, the rest was easy. I gained my studio, covered the Princess with a sheet, turned the key in the door, and went to bed.

IV.

For several days I was prevented from visiting the studio; but, luckily, I locked the door too often for that fact to excite attention. Max, too, had other matters in hand. I hardly saw him except at meals, and then he talked but little, and that rather stupidly. I asked him if he were painting, but he evaded the question, and I also hinted that perhaps he found the Schloss dull. But this he denied, with a feverish eagerness which seemed to me rather out of place. However, I said no more, but left him to his own devices. And I took an early opportunity to leave other matters for a time, and go up to the studio.

Saphyria still lay under the dusting-sheet where I had placed her. I took away the covering, arranged her draperies, and moved my easel to a convenient place. Then I sketched her roughly on the canvas—for I had made up my mind from the first how she would look best—and suddenly remembered a medium for painting which Max had given me, advising me to try it. There was a large bottle of it on a shelf behind the Princess, and I went to get it. By a clumsy movement in lifting it down I spilt the whole of the contents over her.

My first feeling was one of great annoyance. I seized the sheet and began to mop the strongly smelling compound from Saphyria's beautiful robes. Some had fallen on her hand, and I wiped it off. To my surprise the flesh grew soft as I touched it—the stiff fingers relaxed and fell into a natural pose.

For a moment I stood, sheet in hand, gazing foolishly at the medium dropping on the floor. Then an idea flashed through my bewildered brain. I took the wet sheet and rubbed the Princess's arm with exactly the same effect. I had found the corrective to the Italian embalmer's method.

There was only one thing to be done. In the studio was a considerable quantity of the medium, and also an old bath, which I had found useful in many ways. Into this I put the Princess, just as she was, and over her I poured all the medium I could find.

For about ten minutes I let her soak, then I lifted her out upon the floor and commenced to rub her. At first I noticed nothing peculiar beyond the fact that the stiffness of her form had relaxed. But suddenly, without any warning, the arm that I was rubbing moved, her eyes opened, and she pushed me away, and sat up gazing round her with an expression of amazement, not unmixed with fear.

I knelt beside her for a moment staring at her, perfectly helpless with horror. Then the room began to sway about, and the light to flash and darken, and I fell back senseless on the floor.

* * * * * * * *

I must have remained unconscious for some hours, for the electric light was shining in the room when I recovered my senses. A pillow had been placed under my head and some rugs covered me, and, at my feet, leaning against the easel, stood Saphyria. Her dress, I noticed with some surprise, was different. The gorgeous robes were gone and she was clad in quaint silver brocade cut open at the throat and looped about with pearls and tarnished silver cords. Her bright hair was all coiled up and fastened with a braid of pearls, and pearls were upon the little shoes showing beneath the antique petticoat. If she had looked lovely in the vault, how much more lovely did she look now, with a flush in her bent face and a light of expectation in the eyes she fixed on me.

"You are better?" she questioned at last. Her accent was strange and unfamiliar, but the voice was sweet and the manner sympathetic.

"Yes," I said faintly.

"I thought you were dead," she remarked gravely. "You have not moved for so long. I have been quite frightened."

"Has anyone been here?" I gasped.

"A young man knocked, and I opened the door and he ran away. Then I went after him and met a woman, and—she ran away. And then I found a great room with—places in it, and this." She looked down at her dress. "There were ever so many, and very pretty. I like them much better than yours," she added, regarding me with critical eyes; "that black is so very dull. Why don't you wear mail like my father? And why do you speak so very oddly? It is not as other people speak at all. You—you are not like the people I know."

She paused, looking at me as one might at a wonderful new insect.

"But I like you," she went on, evidently with some regard for my feelings. "You are quite good-looking. I admire your eyes. They are like mine." Here she

In the brass coffin lay the figure of a girl.

blushed prettily. "I don't mean that mine are so nice," she hastened to explain, then stopped in some confusion as to whether she had said too much or too little.

"What is your name?" she went on suddenly.

"Eberhard Almerius von Taxel."

A puzzled look grew in her eyes.

"Eberhard—von Taxel? But there is only one, and he is my father!"

"That is my name."

"But it is my father's name," she repeated impatiently; "my father, Prinz von Taxel."

I got up from the floor and faced her.

"I am the Prinz von Taxel," I said.

Her delicate eyebrows puckered, and a quiver bent the corners of her mouth. She looked very childish and piteous, though she was over a thousand years old.

"I do not understand," she faltered.

I did not know how to enlighten her.

"Don't try," I said soothingly; "you, too, have been ill, Princess."

"Yes," she assented dreamily. Then she held out a little jewelled pin. "Would you," she asked—"would you please run this into me?"

I stared at her.

"To wake me up," she explained.

I laughed, though she seemed very serious, and pricked the hand she held out, being careful not to hurt her.

Her face grew more piteous than before.

"I am really awake," she said, "and yet you say you are the Prinz von Taxel, and that your name is Eberhard. I don't remember who you are. You must forgive me, for you know I have been ill."

"You must not think about it; you have never seen me before."

"But where am I?"

"In the Schloss von Taxel."

She tapped her little foot upon the floor.

"But I am not! And I don't like you at all—you are talking lies. Don't I know my own home? This is not the Schloss von Taxel—when did we have this," and she pointed to the easel, "or that great window, or that light that is magical and grows when you touch the wall? And you are not Eberhard von Taxel, or a Prince—you are probably some robber who has carried me off. Don't come an inch nearer or I scream!"

And, though I moved several inches back, she did scream.

I protested my innocence of her charges, and by degrees her shrieks ceased.

"You are quite sure you are safe?" she inquired with a doubting face. "I don't see any racks or daggers about, certainly, but you may—my father always roasts prisoners himself. I never did like the idea," she added apologetically, "but he says it's for the glory of God, so I suppose it's right. Do *you* roast them?"

"Certainly not!" I said indignantly.

"You look quite offended. The Abbot of Selzen always roasts them, too—and I am sure my father is always right—except——"

Her colour changed, and her eyes drooped.

"Except——?" I queried.

She sighed, and looked at me very shyly from beneath her eyelids.

"Except—he would not let me marry poor dear Maximilian," she faltered. "I always wanted to—he was so very handsome, and he rode so well. But of course he was poor—why are men always poor when they are nice?"

"You were very fond of him?"

"Very," she said meditatively. "Do you know him?"

"No."

"My father banished him from Taxel. Do you know where he is now?"

I hesitated, and then came to the conclusion that I did not.

"No, Princess."

She sighed, and glanced round the room.

"You don't seem to know much. Now you can call my ladies-in-waiting."

"Your ladies-in-waiting," I explained boldly, "are not here. You are alone in my charge until you are perfectly recovered, Princess. Neither can you leave this room. I will bring you such food as you require, and some more rugs, and you must stay here."

She eyed me defiantly, but my air of authority overpowered her.

"I suppose you are a leech," she remarked, with some distaste. "Mind, I *won't* swallow anything nasty. And if I am to stay here I must be amused. Bring me a lute, and sing to me, if you can. Or get a minnesinger—I suppose you can?"

"No, that is quite impossible!"

She shrugged her shoulders, and wriggled with disgust beneath the silver brocade.

"You are a very odd person. But I like you, too," she added with a little smile. "You will bring me a lute?"

"I will try, Princess."

So I left her.

The Castle was very silent as I went down the great stairs, and there seemed to be no one about. I went into the dining-hall. The table was laid for dinner, and the silver and glass lit up the room and brightened the gloomy walls, whence strange, dead faces looked from gilded frames with eyes that seemed to see, not the present, but the past. I glanced round for servants, but there were none. I pulled angrily at the bell rope—no one answered. Puzzled, and exceedingly annoyed by this extraordinary neglect I left the room in search of someone, and met Max in the corridor.

His face was very white, and his eyes looked starting out of his head. He put out one shaking hand and touched my arm; and the action seemed to reassure him.

"It is you?" he gasped. "It is really you, Eberhard?"

"Of course! Now who on earth could it be?"

But he was not listening.

"Thank Heaven you've come out of that room alive!" he said, beginning to tremble violently. "Did you see her, Eberhard—the Silver Lady?"

"Yes," I said boldly, "I saw her. She is an ancestress of mine. I have often seen her. My dear Max, you must get over this absurd nervousness—I told you there were lots of ghosts here. Why, they are family friends. I should feel quite lonely if I didn't occasionally see a few. The Silver Lady is a most cheerful spook; I'll introduce you, if you like."

I shall never forget the horrified reproach expressed in his face. He drew back and stared at me.

"How can you talk like that?"

I saw that I was on the wrong lines with him. I took his arm and led him back into the dining-hall.

"Look here, Max," I said gravely. "I am really very sorry you had a fright, but if you make this fuss every servant in the place will leave, and I have no taste for domestic service. For my sake laugh it off, and have some dinner."

He shook his head.

"I can't laugh it off, Eberhard."

"Then eat it off, or drink it off, or do something sensible."

"That dreadful apparition may arrive at any moment."

"Not a bit of it!"

"She will—I know she will. I am not afraid of anything natural, Eberhard—you yourself have seen——"

I seized my opportunity, and turning angrily away from him went towards the table.

"I have seen that you are a fool, Max, and most people would call you a coward. I don't; but I pity you most sincerely. As for staying here to be worried with your fancies, I won't do it. I shall take my dinner up to the studio and have it in peace. Perhaps the Silver Lady will join me. As for you, you had better have some treacle-posset, and go to bed."

I heaped a couple of plates with such things as I could find, stood them on a tray, seized the nearest bottle of wine, and deliberately selected two glasses. This I did out of defiance to Max—also because I myself wanted some dinner.

"You don't really mean it?" he said, as he watched me.

"I mean to dine with the Silver Lady. Good-night, Max. We will drink to the return of your senses!"

I found Saphyria growing impatient at my long delay. Her impatience changed to childish delight in the dainties I had brought her. It was amusing to see her taste, and question, and taste again; and, indeed, I suppose the great science of cookery has altered somewhat since the seventh century.

"You are a wizard!" she laughed. "I am sure the Abbot of Selzen would roast you! Have you brought the lute?"

We had finished, and I handed her a guitar I had brought from the drawing-room. She touched it cautiously, and shook her head.

"Everything you have is strange," she cried pettishly. "No; I am tired. Good-night!"

She rose with a royal air, as of one dismissing a subject, and offered me her hand.

"You will be comfortable, Princess?" I queried.

She glanced at the pile of rugs and cushions.

"Oh, yes," she said carelessly.

I bent over the outstretched hand and kissed it. When I lifted my head I saw that she was surprised at my action.

"Certainly, Maximilian did it," she murmured by way of apology for me. "Poor Maximilian!"

And as I locked the studio door and went up to my room, I, too, said: "Poor Maximilian!"

Leaning idly over the stone balustrade was the Princess Saphyria.

V.

THE next day I found Max very silent and quiet. He did not allude to the Silver Lady, so neither did I, and I spent the greater part of the day in the studio. The servants, when I met them, looked at me out of the corners of their eyes, and brushed past me hastily as though in fear. In this fear of theirs I saw some hope of keeping Saphyria's existence secret, at least, until Max had gone. I had a strange pre-entiment that if Max and Saphyria met there would be a catastrophe of some kind. So I told her shameless lies and legends to the effect that the Schloss was tenanted at present by ruthless enemies, who would roast, boil, or fry her, if they could get hold of her, and thirsted daily for her blood. All this she heard with a clear-eyed air of belief in me, and for several days I had no trouble with her, except the anxiety of watching the studio, and the difficulty of smuggling food up there, which required some ingenuity on my part to achieve.

But one evening when I was walking with Max on the terrace, having, as I thought, safely locked the studio door on my charge, I experienced a rude shock.

The terrace extended along the whole south side of the Schloss. In the middle of it was a fountain, and a pool where goldfish played. We were walking towards the end of the terrace with our backs to the fountain, when a slight noise made me turn round. By the side of the fountain, leaning idly over the stone balustrade, was the Princess Saphyria!

It was too late to prevent Max seeing her: he gripped my arm, and pointed to her excitedly.

I assumed an expression of calmness which I was very far from feeling, and advanced towards her. She lifted her arms from the balustrade and looked me provokingly in the face.

"How dare you come here?" I asked, speaking very sternly.

She hung her head like a scolded child, but I saw that her eyes were laughing.

"I am not a caged bird," she said very meekly.

Fortunately she spoke too low for Max to hear. I, too, lowered my voice.

"Go back as fast as you can, or I am not responsible for your life," I said rapidly; "and let no one stop you. Do you hear?"

"I *was* a Princess once," she pouted; "but now you order me about like a dog."

I could have cursed her obstinacy with great pleasure, but restrained myself.

"I implore you to go, Princess!"

She swept me a mocking bow.

"And I command you to let me alone."

I gave a swift glance over my shoulder, and was relieved to see that Max had not moved.

"Obey me at once!" I whispered.

Her chin went into the air with a jerk.

"Just now you were imploring! Well, you don't seem to know your own mind to-night, Prinz, so I will go. Good-night! Is that the young gentleman who hates me so? I wish I could see his face—it's so dark. But he feels pleasant," and she kissed the tips of her fingers and waved them lightly to Max.

"Will you go?" I growled.

The direction of the fingers changed towards me. She nodded, smiled, moved away, glanced back at me defiantly, and vanished through the nearest door. I returned to Max.

"She is gone?" he said—there was a note of regret in his voice.

"Yes. Do you feel better?"

"She is—very beautiful," he answered vaguely.

There was a catch in his voice, and he was not looking at me.

"It was too dark for you to see her," I replied curtly.

"I could see her very well. She was standing in the light. Her hair is like sunshine. Eberhard——" he stopped.

"Yes?"

"I—I couldn't quite make out her features. You know you were nearer——"

I knew quite well what he wanted me to say, and I determined not to say it.

"Well?"

"Was she—don't laugh—was she like—our sketch, you know?"

I paused. He had made it rather difficult not to answer him.

"Did you think her like it?" I inquired cautiously.

"Yes, very. Didn't you?"

"There is a certain likeness about the hair and the shape of the head, certainly."

"But do you——?"

Here I took refuge in a violent fit of coughing—it was the only thing to do. Max's attention was happily diverted from the subject of Saphyria, and we returned to the house.

But I felt more certain than ever that they had best not meet.

VI.

FOR a whole day after her escapade, Saphyria sulked—sulked childishly, and thoroughly, and would not speak nor look in my direction. I let her alone, and went to Max. He, too, seemed possessed of a dumb devil. He walked restlessly about the room, or sat for hours with a book in his hand. He did not turn a page all the time, so I was satisfied that he was not interested: and presently I asked what was the matter with him. He answered shortly that it was nothing. I waited, and then repeated the question. Again the same answer. I got up and took the shielding volume from his hand.

"Look here, Max, you've got to answer me. What is the matter with you?" I asked him roughly.

He gazed at me blankly.

"I don't know."

I remained looking at him, and he could not stand it. He jumped up, and began to walk quickly up and down the room. Every time he passed me his face was more perturbed; and, at last, I caught him by the arm. He stopped dead.

"I—love her," he said harshly.

"You, what?"

"I—love her," he repeated in exactly the same tone as before. Then he dropped back into his chair, and covered his face with his hands.

"God help me—I think I'm mad!" he muttered.

"I think you are," I said, when I could speak. There was no mistake as to what he meant.

"She's a ghost, you know," I said, or tried to say; but my voice died away in my throat, and I stood silent.

He looked up.

"I don't care if she's fifty ghosts. Where is she, Eberhard?"

I said nothing.

"She has made me mad," he went on. "I can't think of anything else—nor care for anything else—nor see anything else. Tell me her name."

"Saphyria."

"Go on!"

"Von Taxel—was buried early in the seventh century."

The tears rose slowly into his haggard eyes.

"I might have known it," he said softly.

There was silence for a moment; then he rose slowly to his feet.

"You're a good fellow, Eberhard," he whispered. "Don't call me a fool—this time."

And I did not, for before I could do so he was gone.

I went up slowly to the studio and found the door open. I was hardly surprised at this, but it flashed across me that Saphyria might be on the terrace, and that Max would assuredly meet her. The thought gave me a strange mixture of sensations. I pitied Max, and yet I hated him. For Saphyria belonged to me; I had saved her from a living death, and if ever one human being belonged to another she was mine, body and soul. And as I stood by the studio door a strange vision flashed across my mind. I saw Saphyria enthroned as mistress of the Schloss von Taxel. I heard her laughter ringing through the great, dark rooms, her footsteps flying along the terraces.

Her beautiful face rose before me out of the silence, and I found a new meaning in it—a grace it had never worn before.

And the whole thing could so easily be accomplished. I could frighten Max out of the way, take Saphyria abroad, get quietly married somewhere, and return to present my wife to the astonished members of my family. I could make her acquainted with her own strange history whilst we were abroad, and then of course she would be quite ready to marry me—what woman could do less? As for Max, he was a fool.

Meanwhile his folly might give rise to unpleasant complications, so I descended to the terrace. As I passed the picture gallery I reflected that I might have to threaten Max, and that it would be as well to have a weapon handy. There was an unloaded pistol in one of the cabinets. I put it in my pocket and proceeded on my way.

The terrace looked quiet and peaceful in the moonlight—for it was past eleven o'clock. There was no one in sight, and I wondered where on earth Saphyria could be. Then, far off amongst the trees, I saw the fluttering of a woman's dress, and an idea seized me. I left the terrace and raced through the grounds in the direction of the oak with the hawk's nest. Within twenty yards of it I slackened my pace and crept cautiously up in the shadow of the trees. A sound of voices struck my ear—I moved forward and pushed the boughs gently aside. In front of me, leaning against the trunk of the great tree, stood Saphyria; before her, white, and silent, was Max.

She turned suddenly, and I saw her face—it bore a strange expression of exaltation which I had never seen on it before. Her eyes were shining, and she stretched out one hand dramatically.

"You remember," she said, "the tournament at Schönberg, and the 'Contest of Song'? You remember, Maximilian?"

He shook his head, and his eyes looked pained and puzzled.

"No."

She moved forward impetuously and laid her hand on his arm.

"Ah, but you *must* remember!" she repeated.

He said nothing, but he kept his eyes fixed upon her face, and he took her hands and held them in his own.

"You are no ghost!" I heard him murmur presently. It was her turn to look puzzled.

"No ghost? What are you thinking of, Maximilian? I am Saphyria—Saphyria von Taxel."

And then she drooped her head and added very softly: "Your Saphyria."

But still Max did not seem to understand. He stood looking down at her wonderingly.

She went on speaking.

"Where have you been, Maximilian, to forget like this? What has happened to me that you don't know me? Where is my father? What is the matter with everything? The Prinz says——"

Max interrupted her very quickly.

"The Prinz—Eberhard?"

"Yes. Eberhard, Prinz von Taxel. And that, too, I cannot understand, for it is my father's name. Who is this Eberhard von Taxel?"

Max paused before answering her.

"He is the Prinz von Taxel."

"But is there no other?"

"No other. His uncle, the Prinz Almerius, is dead."

"But my father—what of him?"

"I don't know," said Max slowly.

She stamped her foot impatiently.

"But he must be somewhere—he has not vanished. Why the other day he banished you, and now——"

Max gave a sudden start; then he spoke again.

"You are mistaken. I never knew your father."

"But he banished you," she repeated; "he sent you away because I—oh, Maximilian, don't you remember? I—I——" She stopped.

"Why don't you go on?" he asked.

"How can I, when you look like that? I said I *would* marry you—but I won't, I won't," she cried passionately, "if you have forgotten me like this!"

She wrenched her hands free and moved away from him. For a second she stood glaring at him furiously, and then she covered her face and burst into tears. And her grief had a strange effect on Max; he trembled visibly, and his face was the face of one who is trying hard to recollect something long forgotten. He came nearer to her and looked at her with a curious, piteous gaze.

"Tell me," he said in a shaking voice, "you, who are Saphyria von Taxel, tell me—who am I?"

She looked up at him angrily.

"You are making a jest of me!"

"I am not," he answered earnestly. "Saphyria, for mercy's sake, tell me who I am."

She watched him for a moment as if to satisfy himself that he was in earnest. Then she said slowly, as though she were repeating a lesson:

"You are Maximilian, Graf von Leuchtenberg, my father's page, and heir of the lands of Elsenpl——"

She could not finish the word, for Max cried out in a voice strange, and new to me.

"Of Elsenplatz, in the valley of Werwel?"

"Yes."

And then a light came into his face—a light I have never seen in any other face than his. It was as though he was just roused from long and painful sleep, and saw the darkness of the night vanishing from him for ever.

For a few seconds he stood like this, and I was almost afraid of the beauty in his face. Saphyria watched him with strange eyes, but at first he did not look at her.

"I remember it all now," he said, in the same altered tone. "I remember Elsenplatz, and Schönberg—and who you are, and who I was—over a thousand years ago."

Saphyria shrank back and cried out fearfully.

"What do you mean?"

He looked at her for a time before he answered, and a smile crossed his face.

"After all," he answered, "it does not matter—what I mean. What does anything matter so long as you are Saphyria von Taxel, and I, Maximilian—von Leuchtenberg?"

He moved towards her, and I sprang swiftly from my hiding place and stood between them.

As I write I remember how the moonlight fell through the fluttering leaves—I can see Max's white face, and hear Saphyria's shriek.

"She is mine!"

He did not turn back.

"She is mine, Eberhard von Taxel!"

"No," I said sternly; "it is my turn now—you had yours—a thousand years ago. She belongs to me. Give her up!"

"I will not give her up," he answered firmly.

I took the pistol from my pocket and aimed at him. The moonshine glittered whitely on the steel.

"Give her up, or I fire!"

His face grew paler than before, but his eyes met mine unflinchingly. He did not speak at once, and I held my breath to hear his reply. It came at last—it seemed to me that his voice was faint and far away.

"I will not—give her up."

I touched the trigger—there was a sudden, loud report. The pistol had been loaded, after all.

Then, in that moment of despair, I remembered that Max himself had loaded it a day or two ago.

He fell like a log, and lay motionless on the shining grass. And I flung away the pistol and knelt beside him, and tried vainly to restore him to life. The bullet had not missed its mark; he was quite dead. When at last I realised this, I stood up, and looked at the dew on the grass, and the moonlight on the dew, and saw neither.

And presently Saphyria came very softly and knelt beside her lover and took his hands, and called him piteously, like a chidden child. She smoothed back the fair hair which shone where the light touched it, and shook the arm which lay heavily across her knee.

I stood stock still and watched her stupidly with a curious blank feeling in my mind; and then, all at once, she sprang up with a scream, and held out one of her little white hands to me. It was all stained with dreadful red, and I shrank back.

"He is dead," she wailed. "You have slain him—he is dead!"

And from every grove of the forest it seemed as though mocking voices answered her—and myriad fiends chuckled and laughed, and repeated again and again: "He is dead—dead—dead!"

I would have spoken, but that fiendish noise stopped me. I advanced towards her, and in an instant she turned from me and commenced to run. I do not know what impulse moved me—the horror, perhaps, of being left alone with that dread figure in the moonlight—but I pursued her.

She flew up the terraces and gained the house with me after her, and vanished through the little terrace door.

I broke it open and followed her. Through the passages we raced, into the great picture-gallery. Her feet made no noise—it was like hunting a spirit. But I overtook her as we rushed into the gallery, and I put out my hand and caught her flying draperies.

The silver brocade, with its delicate broidery of pearls, tore like a gossamer; but I held her fast. I crushed the arms I held so tightly that I thought she would scream. But she did not. And for a moment I held her, panting, in a grasp of steel.

And then—what I held began to crumble away. The satin shrank over the dwindling flesh—the whole living figure dissolved in my very clutch. In horror I let it go, and it sank at my feet—a few yards of crumpled brocade—a flash of yellow hair. The moonlight, streaming into the gallery, showed it to me with pitiless distinctness. It shone on the quaintly-cut dress, on the pearls, on the gleaming hair—on the handful of dust within, which had once been the Princess Saphyria von Taxel.

* * * * * * * *

I have little more to write. The grey dawn is stealing through the curtains, and it will soon be day. Out in the forest the birds are beginning to stir, the green branches to tremble with life. And under the oak with the hawk's nest lies the silent figure which was once Max Reissiger, my friend, or that other, Maximilian, Graf von Leuchtenberg, who was my enemy. How can I say which, when all is so strange? I only know that I have killed one of them, and that I shall not long survive him. In the gallery, too, lies all that remains of the work of the Italian embalmers.

Where she is who dwelt therein, I know not, and I cannot tell. That, too, is my doing; for the touch of the blood I shed was the spell which crumbled to dust that which had outlasted centuries.

And this is my reward. I can only say, as one before me said: "May all good Christians intercede for the soul of me,

"EBERHARD ALMERIUS VON TAXEL."

NOTE.—These papers were found on the body of the unfortunate Prinz von Taxel, in the studio of the Schloss. He was discovered shot through the head, under such circumstances as could point only to suicide, and that of the most determined description. The remains of his friend, Herr Reissiger, were found under the Hawk's Nest a few hours later. In the gallery, however, there was no trace of any dress, nor was anything found that could verify the deceased Prince's written statement with regard to Saphyria von Taxel. This points to the melancholy fact that the house of Taxel is afflicted with hereditary insanity. From this unhappy affliction sprang, no doubt, the extraordinary double crime, and the still more extraordinary fiction of "The Marble Heart."

"HERE'S FOR YORK" SAYS I

ERE I could step across the kitchen to unbar the door the knock came again, sharp and hard, as though the man without were in no mood for delay. With my hand on the latch, I paused to catch the slow, laboured breathing of a horse that hung its head from very weariness. With it came a scraping sound—the man was shuffling his feet impatiently on the sanded stones. "Here is some fellow that's not used to wait other folks' pleasure," says I to myself. I lifted the latch and threw wide the door, and in the light of the lanthorn saw his hand lifted in act to knock again.

"In the King's name!" says he, with one foot across the threshold.

"And welcome," says I, and made way for him.

He stopped, glancing over his shoulder at the horse.

"Nay," says I, "have him in too. There is naught to spoil," I says, looking round me; "but if there were, he were welcome. We are for the King," says I, willing to make him comfortable on the main point.

He pulled the horse inside. When I turned to it from barring the door I saw with a glance that there was not another half-mile left in it.

It stood 'twixt the dresser and the great table, its forelegs bending in a miserable weakness, its teeth bare of the lower lip, that hung loosely from the jaw, its flanks heaving with a long, steady motion that betokened a desperate struggle for breath. The next moment it had dropped to the floor with a sharp groan.

"Over-ridden," says I.

The man turned to the fire with a gesture of impatience.

"'Tis the most cursed luck," says he. "Sure, I have been followed by ill-fortune——" He broke off and looked suspiciously at the door and window. "You are well protected, master," he says, turning his eyes to mine.

"We can stand a tilt" says I. "Rest easy on that score."

He placed his back to the fire and looked at the panting beast, whose head nid-nodded towards the sand with which Cicely had newly strewn the floor ere she went to bed. It was fighting for its life, but I could see that whatever sorrow the man had for it was as naught to the annoyance that he felt because of the interruption to some pressing business caused by its sad plight. But knowing naught of his concerns, which he had so far kept to himself, I preferred the poor beast's condition to its rider's evident perplexity, and bestirred myself to give it some relief. "A quart of old ale made hot and poured down its throat," says I, as much to myself as to him, "will do it no harm and may do it much good." And to this he said naught, but stood with his back to the fire, looking at the beast at his feet, and sighing every now and then as if he were sore distrest.

Standing by the pan and keeping my fingers in the draught that I had mixed, so that I could tell when the right heat was attained, I took a careful look at the man at my side. He was of my own size and build—a tall, spare fellow, with a deep chest and square shoulders, straight as a pike-staff, and having a certain stern look about his mouth and eyes. His uniform was very plain, but there were jewels in the hilt of his sword, and the feathers that drooped from his hat, draggled as they were, were rich and thick as a gallant's should be. As for his age, it might be thirty or thereabouts—there was a sword cut on his right cheek that was like to deceive in that matter—there could not, I think, have been more than a year between us either way.

The draught grew hot around my finger; I lifted the pan from the fire. The man looked at me as I stepped towards his horse; it was, I think, the first good look he had bestowed upon me. His glance travelled from head to foot, and from foot to head again, and as he met my eyes at the second time he came forward to help me. Between us we poured the ale down the poor beast's throat. "That will revive it somewhat," says I, and sets down the measure.

He backed away from the horse, keeping his eyes fixed on its drooping head.

"There's naught to hope for in him to-night," says he gloomily. "'Tis my usual ill-fortune——"

"Faith!" says I. "It looks more like over-riding. The beast has been ridden to death."

He gave me a quick, curious stare. I stared back at him, and pointed to a seat. He looked at my finger, and from it to the chair, and shook his head; but, with a sudden movement, he turned to the corner of the table and perched himself thereon, swinging one leg over the edge. His face lost its cloud; the white teeth shone under the shadow of his black mustachio.

"So you are for the King, farmer?" he says. "'Sdeath, 'tis a piece of the rarest luck that I chanced to knock at your door! I am at the most desperate pass; but you *are* for the King, eh?" says he with emphasis.

"I said so and mean so," says I.

"'Tis necessary to be sure of things in these times," says he, with a sigh of relief, "and I have that to tell you which I would not willingly tell to the King's lightest enemy. Here I am," he says, lowering his voice, "carrying a dispatch of the strictest importance to Rupert and Newcastle at York—hark you, farmer, 'tis the King's own signature that foots it—and I find myself stopped"—his eyes wandered to the horse—"and followed"—they turned uneasily to the door.

"Followed!" says I.

"As I said," says he, coolly enough. He slapped his leg with his glove. "They have been at my heels for the last ten mile," he says with another glance at the door, "three of them there are, and all well mounted, plague take them! It was that which made me over-ride my poor beast there."

He sat looking at me. His annoyance seemed to have passed away: his present condition might have been some rare adventure and he at his ease in prosecuting it, for he smiled again and began to whistle softly, beating time with his tasselled glove.

"They are without, then?" says I.

"They were within two hundred yards of me when I turned in at your gate," says he. "But where they are now," he says after a pause, "whether listening at your door, farmer, or prowling about your premises, the Lord knows."

I got up from the settle. "That," says I, "is easily discoverable. Do you rest there till I return," I says, pausing at the pantry door. "You're safe in this kitchen as if you were in the Tower itself. As for me," I nodded towards the window and shut the door on him. At the buttery-hatch in the pantry I paused and listened. It was a somewhat cloudy night in July, and there was a slight wind in the fields and hedgerows. The moon had not yet risen, or it was obscured by a cloud, and what light there was showed faint and dim. I opened the shutter of the hatch and got out into the little garth. I knew every nook and corner thereabouts: it was the easiest thing in the world to gain the belt of trees before the house unnoticed. I was between the great ash and the hedgerow, creeping close to the latter and taking good heed not to crack even a dry twig, when I became aware of the three troopers.

They were out on the road, under the beeches that reached long arms from the coppice on the other side, and each man sat his horse in such a strict quietness that you might have sworn horse and man were of bronze or marble. Nay, the sudden sight of them sitting there gave me a turn—there was something ghostly about it. But when one of them spoke I was all ears on the instant, and thought of them only as men that must be outwitted.

"That he turned in here," says one, "is certain. Why he turned aside is not so certain. But if he carries dispatches for Rupert at York 'tis certain that he must go northward and along this road. And so the question is where to stay him in his progress."

"Why not here?" says another.

"There may be some strength of the enemy in this house," says the first.

"A lonelier spot, now——"

"I know this country, every inch of it," says the third man. "Leave it to me. Two miles ahead lies Marshford Common—there's no likelier spot 'twixt here and York—as desolate a waste it is as you could wish."

"Shall we go forward and wait him there?" says the man who spoke first. But the man who favoured the common hummed and hahed, and I discovered that after all he did not know so much of the neighbourhood as he had made out. Then they talked again and the end of it was that they backed their horses into the coppice and waited for his coming forth. When they were safely bestowed amongst the beeches I went back to the buttery-hatch, and as I went I thought, and made a plan that had some purpose in it.

The man sat on the edge of the table, just as I had left him. His mouth was screwed up to whistle the first notes of a new tune, but at sight of me his lips came together in a straight line and his eyes looked at me with a question in them. I shrugged my shoulders and looked at the horse that still heaved and panted on the floor. "They are without," I says, turning towards the fire, "they will wait your going forth and then follow you to Marshford Common, where they purpose to take you in the rear."

"Do they so?" says he. He cocked his hat at the blackened rafter above and the glance of his eye ran along it as his lips pressed themselves for another tune. But instead of whistling he suddenly began to sing.

> "There was a squire of Kent,
> And six tall sons had he——

"But come, master farmer," says he, breaking off short, "are we to be outwitted by three crop-eared Roundheads?" He looked me up and down and I again caught the gleam of his white teeth under his mustachio. "I take thee to be a cock of the right breed," he says, and gives me a nod. I stood looking at him.

"'Tis the King's dispatch?" says I. His eyes fixed themselves on mine, and I saw the white teeth shut slowly down on his lip. "I would do much to serve the King," I says, our eyes still meeting.

"There is some plan in your head," says he.

I sat down on the settle. He looked at me for a moment, and then put his hand within his doublet and drew out a thin packet of paper. It was tied about with a skein of blue silk, and there was writing on each side of the knot. His finger pointed

to a word in the corner. "Come," says he, "your plan, farmer," and he put back the packet.

"I am not without horses," says I. I glanced him up and down. "We are much of a build," I says. "If I were on one horse, and in your uniform——" He started and slapped his thigh. "'Sdeath!" he says. "I take you—but proceed."

"And you were on another in my clothes," I says, "and if I took the road across the Common, and you followed one that I can tell you of—— Do you see what I mean," says I.

He planted his hands on his knees and stared hard at me.

"By Heaven!" says he. "An' we come through with it the King shall reward you fittingly. But 'tis more like to end in your death," he says, and shakes his head.

"I'll take my chance of that," says I. "Come, is it settled between us?"

He got down from his perch on the table and looked round the kitchen.

"Are you a married man?" says he. "Have you wife and children?"

"Neither the one nor the other," says I.

"A mother, then?" says he.

"In the churchyard two miles away," says I.

He nodded and once more looked me up and down, ending with a long stare into my face.

"I take your offer, friend," says he, and held out his hand. "My name is Eustace Blunt."

"Mine is Stephen Mann," says I, with my hand in his.

"No better man in England!" says he, with a laugh at his own wit. "Come, I am in your hands, Stephen. What do we do first?" His eyes turned to the horse. "Is my poor beast to remain in your kitchen all night?" he says. "There's nought else for it," says I. "We can pass where he can't. But he shan't spend the night alone," and I ran up the back stairs and wakened Dick from a sound sleep and brought him down. He rubbed his eyes and blinked at the strange man, but I knew that he comprehended me, and would follow out my orders. While he returned to his chamber to attire himself, Blunt and I changed clothes. Dick came down again and stared. "Lordsake!" says he. "'Tis the most marvellous fit." He looked from one to the other. "I lay aught," he says, "there's not an inch between you—'odswound, wi' your backs to me, I could not tell t'other from which a score yards away!"

I became aware of the three troopers.

There was a faint show of moonlight in the fold, and I kept under the wall, lest one of the troopers should have dismounted and come a-prowling about my premises. More than once, ere we reached the stable door, I paused to listen and heard naught. Once within the stable, we were busy enough for five minutes, saddling and bridling. "Not till I give the word," says I, and went outside to scatter a forkful of manure across the cobble stones before the door. "Now then, Master Blunt," I says, "listen to me carefully. First I shall set out, leading my horse across the paddock to the front gate, thence to ride along the high road. Give me a good ten minutes' start ere you set forth yourself. When your time is up," I says, "follow the high road for half a mile, and then turn to your right. You will find yourself in a grass lane—faith! 'tis something rough for riding, but it will serve our purpose to a nicety, since it will enable you to skirt the common. You will follow it for a good three mile ere you come to a signpost, but when you come to that you are on the straight road to York again. And so farewell!" says I.

"But yourself," says he. "Shall we not meet beyond the common?"

"Why, scarcely," says I, with a laugh, "since 'tis on the common itself that I am to divert the enemy. If you hear sounds of brawling," I says, "don't stop to listen further, but——"

"But 'tis to almost certain death that I am sending you," says he, with concern.

"I value my life at a high figure," says I. "I'll not part with it so easily." And I made for the door, drawing my horse after me. Blunt lays his hand on my arm. "What is it you rely on?" says he.

"On my acquaintance with the lay of the common," says I, chuckling. "They shall have a pretty dance across it ere they lay a finger on my bridle, if indeed chance so favours them."

"But if you come to close quarters?" he says, still unwilling to let me go.

"Farewell," says I. "If we stand chattering here I shall never give them the chance," and I led my horse across the manure and round by the paddock to the front of the house. Under the shadow of the apple trees I mounted him and went boldly up to the road-gate. The moon came forth from the clouds at that moment, and I saw the road like a streak of silver between me and the coppice. There was scarce a sound, but as I wheeled to the right I caught a glimpse of one of the troopers, whose head and shoulders stood framed against the sky by two straight larch trees.

Before I had ridden a quarter of a mile along the road I heard the steady pounding of their horses' feet behind me. I turned in the saddle and looked back—they came over a slight rise in the road, riding abreast. There was that in the steadiness of their pace that gave me a notion of their resolution in the matter. "Faith, 'tis no easy thing that I have undertaken!" says I to myself. But there was a spice of adventure in the thing that pleased me. "You shall have a merry dance for your money, my masters!" I says. "And a clean pair of heels to gaze after in the end, if luck's with me." And I touched my horse with the spur and went on at a quicker pace.

I might have been halfway between the end of the lane where Blunt was to turn off, according to my directions, and the first stretch of the common, when a sudden thought (how I came by it, I know not) caused me to clap my hand to the pocket of my coat. The surprise that came to me as my fingers closed on the dispatch that should have been in Blunt's care and not in mine, made me pull up the horse. "Of all the mistakes!" says I, and sits there at a dead loss. My hand that had dropped to the bridle went back to the bulky thing inside my coat. "'Tis the King's letter, sure enough," says I in a vague sort of despair. My hand dropped to the reins again. I suddenly burst into a fit of hearty laughter. "We forgot the main thing, after all," I says, and chuckled over it.

But the matter was not to be laughed away. There I was in possession of his Majesty's dispatch, a thing of the strictest importance, and behind me rode three Roundhead troopers that were anxious enough to lay fingers on it. As for Blunt, that should have had it in keeping, he was by that time riding into the narrow lane a mile in the rear. I wondered whether he had already discovered our mistake. "But what's to be done?" says I, still at a loss.

There was a clatter of hoofs in the road behind me, and the three troopers came round the corner of Foxholes Spinney with a steady swing. I dug my spurs into the horse. "Here's for York!" says I.

The common suddenly widened out before me. I saw Dick Pritt's granary roof shine white in the moonlight, for all that we were a good mile and a half from it. "Now, then," says I, "what's the best plan? Shall I ride for it by the road, or shall I give the troopers a jog over the common?" I half turned in the saddle. The three of them, still riding close together, were within two hundred yards of me. The moonlight struck the polished steel of their breast-pieces. I turned the horse's head into the common. "Three to one," says I, "is unfair odds. Let's take what natural advantage we can."

There were four square miles of common, and 'twas as tricky a bit of land as a man might find in a day's march. There was a ditch here and a marsh there, and both well hidden by the long, rank grass that grew thick all over the place. A man that did not know the lay of the ground and rode his horse across it with a loose rein, was more likely to come to grief than not—nay, if he came within measurable distance of Butter-Bum Hole he was like to leave horse, saddle, and bridle in its black depths, and think himself lucky if he escaped with his own life. You could ride up to the very edge of the hole and see naught of its treachery, but set a foot in it, amongst the butter-bums and marsh-mallows, and you went down, down, with a nasty sucking motion that made you turn white to the gills and hasten to safer ground. Altogether 'twas an ill place for strangers, but safe enough to me that knew every inch of it, and could have crossed it blindfold.

Ere I had ridden twenty yards into the rank grass, the three men gave a sudden shout and dashed across the common to intercept me. I could have laughed with glee—they had not gone a dozen strides ere the foremost horse went knee deep in a ditch and flung its rider over its head. The other two drew rein. I was in hopes the horse had broken a leg, poor beast, but in a trice the trooper had picked himself up and remounted. The three of 'em came after me, feeling their way. As for me, knowing the lay of the ground I took my time. Butter-Bum Hole was in front. I must rid myself of one if not two of them in its black depths. If all three would but ride into it and sink fifty fathoms deep there would be less need for all the bother that I foresaw ere His Majesty's dispatch left my hands. But that seemed too much to expect, though indeed they were riding close together.

When I had suffered them to come within thirty yards of me the moon suddenly disappeared behind a bank of cloud. "That's in my favour," thinks I, and presses on. But she suddenly peeps out through a little rift, and on the instant I heard a

He sent another bullet whisting after me that took off my hat.

Smoke

The Celebrated

"PIONEER"

SWEETENED TOBACCO.

Known all over the World.

MANUFACTURED BY THE

RICHMOND CAVENDISH CO. LTD.,

At their Bonded Works, **LIVERPOOL.**

SOLD BY ALL FIRST-CLASS TOBACCONISTS AT HOME & ABROAD.

1oz. and 2oz. Packets, and ¼lb., ½lb., and 1lb. Tins.

'REAL IRISH TWEED.'

UNEQUALLED FOR WINTER WEAR.

Warmth and Durability combined with Cheapness.

SUITS 35/6.
TROUSERS 9/6.

CARRIAGE PAID.

I have pleasure in intimating to my numerous patrons that my **New Winter Patterns** are now ready, and can be had on application, together with self-measure form—**Suits, 35 6; Trousers, 9 6;** Carriage Paid. In every case and every pattern I send out is guaranteed All Pure Wool, free from Cotton or Shoddy. I guarantee Colour, Wear, Fit, and Finish, or money refunded.

My System of Self-measurement is almost perfect; not one solitary Garment has been returned, either for Alteration or Misfit, for the past Twelve Months.

Hundreds of Testimonials from all classes—Captains, Colonels, Doctors, Clergymen, Artisans, &c., &c.

No house in the Trade holds such Testimonials for Workmanship, Fit, and Finish.

I am no Factory or Slop Tailor; every Garment is cut to measure, and finished in the best style of workmanship.

REPEAT ORDERS ARE MY MOTTO.

SPECIALITY.

Hand-woven Frieze, Hand-woven Laharna Rugs, Hand-woven Tweed. All done on the Premises. Send for Pattern and compare value. Try strength and examine Fibre. For hard, honest wear no tweed to compare with real Irish, but see that you get it.

Patterns sent free, with self measuring form, on application to—

D. TOWELL,

ROYAL AVENUE, BELFAST, & LARNE,

BANKERS: BELFAST BANKING CO. LIMITED.

What does this contain?

12 LITTLE BOTTLES.

What do they contain?

BOVRIL

What does IT contain?

THE VITAL PRINCIPLE

OF

PRIME OX BEEF.

BOVRIL LIMITED, Food Specialists, LONDON.

Directors:

The Right Hon. LORD PLAYFAIR, G.C.B., LL.D.

Dr. FARQUHARSON, M.P., and others.

sharp report, and caught the whistle of the bullet as it flew past my head. "Ho! ho!" says I. "Come, we grow too familiar." But we were then close to the Hole, and the moon was hidden again. I went on slowly, holding my horse back, and at the same time calling loudly on him to hasten. I think the beast saw through my device—be that as it may, he knew his duty when we came to the Hole, and stepped along its confines like a Christian, feeling for a sure footing at every yard, and balancing himself on the great tussocks of grass as cleverly as a posture-master. And so in a moment we were clear of the marsh, and I drew rein to watch the troopers attempt it.

There was not a yard between them as they came to it, and each rode at a rattling pace. I vow they had no notion of what lay before them, for the butter-bums and marsh-mallows grew thick over the black bog, and the Hole looked like a flowering bit of common. Close to them as I was, I stopped altogether to see how they would fare. You would have thought they were clearing the whole thing, but the man on the left seemed suddenly to drop to the earth and over him rolled the fellow in the middle. The man on the right, following the path that I had taken, pulled up his beast with a jerk that threw it on its haunches, and I saw him turn to gaze at the men and horses rolling and wallowing in the mud. "Farewell, my masters!" said I, and laughed long and loud as I cantered off. But I was reckoning a bit too soon, for he sent another bullet whistling after me that took off my hat. "Come," says I, "let's be moving in good earnest."

Looking over my shoulder, I saw that the man who had escaped the marsh was following me with determination. He had evidently seized the situation and made up his mind to follow my plans. So in and out we wound, over a ditch here and through a cluster of gorze bushes there, and he made no such foolish mistake as to try to cut me off or to take a shorter route, but held on at my heels. "Come," says I, "this is something like a run. But since we are bound for York," I says, "let's have a straight road." We were then close upon Dick Pritt's farm, and as I caught sight of its high gables I minded me of the sign-post beyond its home-fields, where the highroad that I had set out upon, and the lane which Blunt was to follow, met. "Straight ahead!" says I. "Dyke or fence, post-and-rails, wall or gap, over we go." The horse tucked his big thighs under him and tossed his head—faith, I believe he loved the spirit of the thing as dearly as his rider! And so we went straight across what bit of common there was left, and skimming Dick Pritt's new fence like a swallow, landed in the lush grass of the Home Garth. "If we can't shake Master Trooper off ere we come to yonder hedge," says I, "call me a Dutchman." And away we went helter-skelter across that field, up and down—for it lay in broad furrows—the horse stretching his legs like a greyhound, and suddenly the hedgerow rose high before us. I turned in the saddle as we crashed through the thin bows at the top—God's faith, the trooper was not a score yards in our rear. "This is better sport than I had reckoned for," says I.

There were yet three meadows between me and the sign-post, and it was good going over all of them. I leant forward and spoke in my horse's ear—egad, I felt him tighten up all over! The air rushed round my hatless head, the stars seemed to dance all across the heavens. The hedgerows shot up in front like ghosts, but we were over and through them, and settled into our stride again ere I had time to count one.

I saw the sign-post, a black, two-armed thing outlined against the sky, at the corner of the last field. We were close on the hedgerow then, and as I settled down for the leap I heard Blunt's horse clattering up the narrow lane to my right. He was within a score yards as we flew over the top, and in another instant we were side by side on the high road. The moon sailed out of the cloud-bank; we stared at each other.

"Ah!" says he, "the troopers ——?"

"Two of 'em in Butter-Bum Hole," says I. "The third ——"

But the third must have ridden a rare horse, for at that instant he dropped over the hedge with a force that made the ground shake. We had drawn rein in the middle of the high road, and he caught sight of us and came forward. But within a dozen paces his beast swayed and fell, tumbling him off into the dust. In spite of all his Roundheadedness he rapped out a roaring curse. "Well ridden for all that!" cries I, and we rode onward. "You are quit of all three," I says. I fell to laughing as I told him of the men and horses rolling over each other in Butter-Bum Hole. "'Twas the rarest adventure," I says. "I wouldn't ha' missed it for the world."

"Why, faith," says he, "you make me envious. The lane was tame enough—a mere matter of straight a-head work."

He said naught of the dispatch. But at the corner of Dead Man's Copse I drew rein and held out my hand. "I'll go home," says I. "You have no further need of me. We will exchange horses and clothes as you return."

"Let me keep my thanks till then," says he, giving me his hand. "To-morrow or the next day we shall meet again, Master Stephen."

"Aye," says I, and turned my horse's head homewards. But ere he broke into a canter I pulled him up and wheeled about again. "Hah!" says I, "I had almost forgotten to give you the dispatch," and I handed it over. He clapped his hand to his breast. "The dispatch?" says he. "The dispatch? But surely——"

"So you did not know that I had it?" says I. "Faith, but it lay very near my heart!" and without more ado I turned about and cantered off, leaving him there in the moonlight, staring open-mouthed at the packet in his hand.

By Reginald Horsley

Author of "The Yellow God" "The Blue Balloon" Etc

"A MEAN skunk, ez ain't fit ter do nothin' but set around an' look or'nery. What's he doin' callin' hisse'f a so'jer? It'd be a durned sight better all around ef a Yankee bullet 'd let daylight through the thing he calls his heart. We'd be rid o' him then, an' the kump'ny could hold up its head agen."

Lieutenant Adrian Merton, on duty in the trenches, heard, and, secure from observation behind a traverse, hid his face in his hands and wept.

It was the time when the thunders of war were rolling and crashing over the United States. Away in the east the Confederates were holding their own; but here in the west, Grant, with his huge army coiled like a great snake around Vicksburg, was waiting his opportunity to strike a deadly blow at the Confederacy and gain possession of the Mississippi. Until he reached the bridge over the Big Black River, almost at the gates of Vicksburg, the Federal commander had easily brushed aside the small bodies of troops that ventured to oppose him; but at this point his progress had been arrested by General Pemberton, who fought him for two days, effectually checking him, when at last forced to retreat, by burning the bridge over the river as he withdrew.

It was during this movement that Lieutenant Adrian Merton, Company C of the Mississippi Musketeers, acquired unenviable notoriety by running away.

It was Adrian's first battle. He was a dreamy youth of one-and-twenty, much more fitted to sing the battles of his country than to fight them; yet, when the news of Grant's approach thrilled the district around Vicksburg, he had sprung to arms with a heart aglow with patriotic fervour, ardent to be among the first to repel the invaders. In consideration of his station, a place had been found for him as lieutenant of a company of recruits, just drafted into the regiment of Mississippi Musketeers, or "Muskeeters," as the veterans had dubbed themselves, in grim allusion to their power to sting.

To this regiment of war-worn campaigners came Adrian, in all the glory of his new uniform, shining scabbard, and lieutenant's bars glittering upon his shoulders. The old "Muskeeters" grinned when they saw him, and jestingly remarked that it wouldn't be long afore he'd git some o' the peach bloom rubbed off 'n his cheeks. But they all liked the lad. He was so frank and handsome, so courteous and pleasant, and, they thought, so brave.

How could he fail to be the last? Had not his father, Brigadier-General Merton, fallen at the head of his brigade at the bloody fight of Shiloh! Could the son of such a father be anything but brave?

Alas! for all their hopes! On the morning of the battle the regiment, in the van as usual, had marched proudly to the front, drums beating, colours flying; and with it, his face flushed and his heart throbbing curiously under the influence of a novel sensation which he did not attempt to define, went Adrian.

A courier dashed up, hot and panting.

"General Pemberton's compliments, Colonel, and you will send a company up the river to feel for the enemy. If they meet him they are to amuse him as long as possible. If any attempt at a flanking movement is observed, you are to send word at once to headquarters."

"Very good. Captain Blake, take Company C and swing up the river towards Bridgeport." The Colonel repeated the General's instructions. "You quite understand?"

"Perfectly, Colonel."

The company stepped off briskly—all recruits, all young men, with the exception of the captain, the senior lieutenant, and a grizzled sergeant, who had fought under Adrian's father. The youngsters smiled at the idea of amusing the enemy, a term which was new to them. A grim amusement it was likely to prove for some of themselves. But they did not think of that just then.

Adrian's head was held high and his eyes glittered. The flush upon his face had concentrated into two burning discs of colour, high up on either cheek. His heart thumped in unison with the quickstep of the men, and he found himself repeating silently: "Left—right—left—right," over and over again monotonously. Then the beats quickened and outran the pace of the marching soldiers; but still the words went on: "Left—right—left—right," faster and faster, till they seemed to rush in a mad race through his brain. He felt no fear; he felt no sensations of any kind whatever. Thought had been banished, ideas swallowed up by those unvarying monosyllables: "Left—right—left—right."

"Company halt! Form line! Eyes right! Dress! Eyes front! Stand at ease! Stand easy!"

Adrian did not hear the order, but presently became conscious that he had halted and was standing in his proper place, with the grizzled Sergeant at his elbow, looking anxiously at him.

"Left—right—left—right—left—right," gabbled Adrian aloud. The flush was coming and going again now, and the pupils of his eyes were beginning to dilate.

"Steady, Mr. Merton, steady!" muttered the Sergeant. "Keep cool."

"Left—right—left—right," said Adrian. He thought he had answered: "I am as cool as a cucumber."

The Sergeant glanced around apprehensively. No one had heard. The attention of everyone was fixed upon the front. He gripped Adrian by the arm and put his mouth close to the young man's ear.

"Remember your father! remember your father!" he said twice between his teeth.

"Left—right—left—right," said Adrian more slowly and with lengthening pauses between the words. His eyes were fixed and staring. The colour still came and went in his cheeks; but it ebbed and flowed more slowly.

"Left—right—left——"

This time the captain heard and swung round. For a moment his eye rested upon Adrian, and then he walked straight up to him.

"Mr. Merton," he began, "are you mad, or—Ah!" He fell to the ground, dead, his face striking against Adrian's boot.

"Left—right—lef—t—righ—t," dropped brokenly from Adrian's trembling lips. The colour had ebbed for the last time, leaving him ashen.

A sheet of flame somewhere in front, a crisp, crackling sound, a venomous humming past his ears and over his head, a low groan, a sharp cry here and there, the thud of falling bodies—and then the Sergeant's voice once more.

"Mr. Merton, sir! For God's sake! The captain is killed, the lieutenant is down, the men are wavering. Tell them what to do, sir. Quick! Quick! Say anything!"

Adrian's mouth opened and shut. The colour came creeping back into his cheeks, his sword hand was slowly raised. Then, suddenly, the boom of a mortar and the long-drawn, infernal screech of a shell.

Adrian shrieked—no word of command, no sharp summons to advance or retreat, but a simple shriek of horror—shrieked and fled by the way he had come.

After him sped the Sergeant, swearing, shouting, howling at him to return. The men looked round and misunderstood. It seemed that their officers were deserting them. Their nerves, already overstrung, gave way, the panic spread with electric swiftness, and in an instant the compact mass that had been Company C was shivered into disorganised, palpitating, fleeing atoms.

Then the enemy threw a division at leisure across the river, some eight miles higher up, and Pemberton, fearful of a flank attack, hastily retreated into Vicksburg, spiking his guns, and burning bridges behind him. This was what came of Adrian's fright.

But this was not all. In half-an-hour the men of Company C ran in upon the supports, and being forcibly stopped, rallied, forgot their fears, and, burning to wipe out their disgrace, fought like lions all through the long May day. All but Adrian, who, trembling and shivering, with blue lips and chalky face, fell under the feet of the Colonel's charger and lay as one dead.

The Colonel reined his horse gingerly to one side. "Is he hit?" he inquired.

The grizzled Sergeant stepped forward and saluted. He had fought under Adrian's father, and his heart was wrung with shame and pity for the lad. He had seen this sort of thing before, and knew just what it was. The son of his old general a coward. Nonsense! It was the boy's first battle. Had one moment more of grace been allowed him he would have firmed up and stood steady. But then that frightful, withering scream. That had done the trick and turned a strong, brave youth into a helpless bundle of quivering nerves. The Sergeant knew exactly, though he could not have worded his explanation.

"I think so, sir," he said in answer to the Colonel. "Shall I take him to the rear?"

But the Colonel had already turned away, too preoccupied with the thickening events around him to bestow a second thought upon a fallen man. So the Sergeant beckoned to a couple of privates, and between them they bore the unconscious Adrian to the field hospital, where the Surgeon, looking, but for his anxious face and kindly, sympathetic eyes, like a red-armed butcher, fought death in horrid shapes, and sometimes conquered.

"The wind of a shell, Doctor," said the Sergeant, saluting.

The Surgeon glanced at Adrian's grey face and pouting lips, which puffed out little flakes of foam at irregular intervals, and laid his hand against the heart.

"A blue funk, my man," he said laconically.

"A blue funk, my man," he said laconically. "Leave him there and I'll attend to him presently."

So the grizzled Sergeant returned to the front, and all that day Adrian lay among the wounded and dying, himself whole and unharmed, rousing out of one swoon but to fall into another, till at nightfall they put him into a cart and drove him to his mother's house in Vicksburg.

"The wind of a shell, madam," said the Sergeant, saluting with his left hand. The right was in a sling, and two fingers were gone from it since the morning. "The wind of a shell. He'll be all right and about again in a day or two."

But he was not. For days he lay shouting or babbling as the fever rose and fell, while his tender mother bent over him, calling him her darling son, her brave boy, her hero. For nobody had cared to tell her the truth. Then, when the fever finally abated, weeks passed while he lay prostrate, helpless, listening with white set face and closed eyes to the booming of cannon, the sharp rattle of musketry, the hoarse grumble of artillery trains over the stony streets. The Colonel snatched a few moments from his duties to visit him, shook the mother's hand, and departed without a word. Outside the house he swore a great oath in anger. The regimental Surgeon looked in for the last time, swept half-a-dozen medicine bottles into a corner, and went his way muttering: "Constitutional. I suppose he can't help it."

Then at last the grizzled Sergeant came. He took the young man's white, blue-veined hand in his own horny fist. "Master Adrian," he said huskily, "your father's son."

"Who are you, sir?" inquired the General.

The pale face flushed hotly, but there was no answer.

"Master Adrian, they're saying that you're lying here to keep out of harm's way. I know better. Face 'em, sir, and give 'em the lie."

No answer.

"Master Adrian!" The strong voice broke. "Master, Adrian! Your father—my general—*Master Adrian!*"

Adrian raised himself upon his left arm and threw his right around the Sergeant's neck. "Thank you, Sergeant," he whispered, and kissed the wrinkled forehead.

That evening Lieutenant Adrian Merton reported fit for duty.

The Colonel made no comment—offered no congratulation. He locked his hands behind his back, and said brusquely: "You may rejoin your company, Lieutenant—for your father's sake." The pause was just perceptible.

The news spread. Company C heard and was furious. The men had worked hard to wipe away the stain upon their honour, and now, just as they seemed about to succeed, this branded coward who had caused the mischief, this poltroon who for weeks had lain sheltering himself behind his mother's apron while they fought and bled, this mean skunk was to be given the chance of disgracing them again. It was intolerable. They flung down to their perilous duty in the trenches at a white heat, scowling at their Lieutenant and sullenly muttering.

Within the trenches Adrian strode to and fro, now and then issuing a brief order, which was received in sulky silence, as the men waited for the attack which, on that night at least, never came. Now and again coarse jest or furious comment upon himself reached his ears, but in the darkness it was impossible to say from whom they proceeded, even had he cared to know.

He leant against a traverse and gazed up at the starry sky. Far away a dull roar, a stream of fire mounting upwards, and then again the long-drawn screech which had wrought so much mischief in him a few weeks ago. Now he stood, staring stonily, with steady pulse, and breath coming and going regularly. He heard a sudden clatter of feet and voices as the men rushed for shelter, but he stood still.

"Look out! Here she comes."

Crash! A scream of pain. Then a voice: "That's over. Who's gone under?"

"Bill Soames."

"Poor Bill!" Then a laugh. "Whar's the skunk?"

"Leanin' fer home, I 'magine. Gone back ter his mammy." Another laugh. "Pity it warn't him, 'stead o' poor Bill Soames."

"Yah! A mean skunk, ez ain't fit ter do nothin' but set around an' look or'nery. What's he doin' callin' hisse'f a so'jer? It 'd be a durned sight better all around ef a Yankee bullet 'd let daylight through the thing he calls his heart. We'd be rid o' him then, an' the kump'ny could hold up its head agen."

It was at this that the tears forced themselves out of Adrian's eyes as he leant his aching head against the parapet and dug his nails into the dry earth. Oh! if another shell would but come and end it all. Or, if not, then opportunity. Only one, just one, that he might show that his father's spirit was not dead within him. He was not a coward. He knew it, he felt it. That sudden panic he could not explain, and the weeks of desolate, burning anguish that had been his. Ah! how could he have lain there when in one glorious moment he might have wiped away his disgrace? Men had run away before and fought none the worse afterwards. See how calm he was now. Oh, for opportunity!

Another voice reached him. "We can't last much longer at this rate."

"How's that?"

"Why, I hearn 'em a-sayin' ez percussion caps was gittin' mighty ska'ce. This all day an' all night firin' in the trenches has sunk the heap powerful low."

"Waal, why in thunder don't they raise some more?"

"How they goin' ter git em?"

"Git word along to Gin'ral Joe."

"Sho! Who's a-goin' through them lines?"

"Better send the skunk along."

"Haw! haw! Likely, ain't it?"

Adrian heard and his sad heart thrilled with joy. His prayer was answered. Silently he unbuckled his sword and laid it on the ground; it could not help him in what he was going to do. He ran his fingers over the chambers in his revolver and fumbled in his cartridge pouch. It was full. He waited.

"Look out! Here comes another." Crash! Hurry-skurry, and in the confusion the watcher sprang upon the parapet unobserved, and crawled away into the darkness.

For the second time Lieutenant Adrian Merton had deserted Company C; but this time his face was towards the foe.

* * * * * *

Later on the following night a staff officer approached General Joseph Johnston, who lay at Jackson, concentrating a force with which to assail Grant's rear.

"What is it?" demanded the General.

"A Confederate officer, General, fresh from Vicksburg, desires to speak with you upon a matter of pressing importance."

"From Vicksburg! Admit him at once."

Haggard and pale, his face and hands covered with bleeding scratches, without his cap, his clothes torn and disarranged, Adrian entered, saluted, and stood waiting to be addressed.

"Who are you, sir?" inquired the General.

"Adrian Merton, General. Lieutenant in the Mississippi Musketeers."

"The son of the late General Robert Merton?"

"Yes, General."

General Johnston held out his hand. "I am glad to see you, Lieutenant," he said heartily. "What does your presence here and in such disorder mean? Doubtless you bring dispatches from General Pemberton. Let me have them."

Adrian shook his head. "No, General. Only a verbal account of the state of affairs."

"Very good. Let me hear your story. But stop a moment; you look terribly fatigued and worn. When did you eat last?"

"Thirty-six hours ago," answered Adrian faintly. For in his eagerness to rejoin his company he had slipped away from home, leaving his supper untasted.

"Good Heavens! Here, orderly!"

"Sir!"

"Some food for Mr. Merton. Anything you can get. Smart, now. In the meantime, Lieutenant, drink this." He poured some wine from a flask into a tin cup and handed it to Adrian, who drank it gratefully. "Now," went on the General, "tell me in a few words the news you bring."

"I am all right now, General," said Adrian. "The matter is this: There has been such a continuous fire from the trenches that the supply of caps is running very low, and unless more can be obtained the town cannot hold out. I heard General Pemberton telling Colonel Savage so as I passed them last night, but the

The volley crashed, and the tall man went down.

full force of it did not strike me until I was in the trenches. The ill news had spread, and the men were beginning to grumble."

"So General Pemberton sent you along to let me know?"

"He did not order me to come, General," said Adrian hastily. "I volunteered. I—that is——"

"Quite so," interrupted Johnston, misunderstanding the hesitation. "Very proper. First rate of you." He nodded approvingly. "And you ran the pickets easily?"

"Not easily, General. But I did it, and it can be done again. If you will give me, say, a dozen men, each with as many caps as he can carry, I will undertake to lead them through to our lines."

"You know the country well then?"

"Every yard of it. The outer line of the Federal pickets is about twelve miles this side of Vicksburg. There the difficulty will begin. The road between that point and Jackson is clear."

The General nodded again. "I know, I know," he said. "Well, eat your supper and then lie down and get a good night's rest. Nothing can be done before to-morrow."

* * * * * *

The Federal pickets were on the alert. Rumour had it that Pemberton contemplated a sortie, and the rear must be protected. The sentinels were doubled along the outer line, and the woods were full of scouts, pushing as near as they dared in their eagerness to learn what Johnston was about. Everywhere was alarm and unrest, and the thirteen men who groped their way through the forest and trod with the silent tread of backwoodsmen through the long, dark ravines knew it by a thousand signs, and wondered if they themselves were the cause.

The long night passed, and morning found them but six miles from their goal. Only six miles. Yes; but the worst might be yet to come, for they were now in the heart of the Federal lines. But they learnt one fact as they rested out of sight among the rocks throughout the hot June day. The scare of the night before had not been raised by them. Their errand was unsuspected—so far.

Night came again at last, sultry and oppressive, and low down on the horizon a heavy cloud bank, threatening thunder, mounted slowly towards the moon. At eleven o'clock they took up their march again, creeping like cats out of their shelters until they reached the shady side of the ravine.

From rock to rock they moved in Indian file, Adrian leading, and the men at intervals of a few feet behind him, just within touch of one another. Suddenly the Lieutenant stopped, and, as his hand rested lightly on the man behind him, the signal ran swiftly down the line, and each soldier halted where he stood or crouched.

Ten paces in front, on the bank above, two Federal sentries stood, only half revealed in the moonlight as they peered from behind a couple of overhanging trees. Their ears, intently strained, had caught some sound which could not be accounted for. Their fingers touched the triggers of their rifles.

"I thought I heard something," muttered one.

"'Twas only the wind," said the other. "It's freshening a bit, as it always does before a storm. See them clouds rolling up. It's going to be a big one."

"Wait for the darkness," whispered Adrian, and the word went down the line.

A cloud, advance guard of the storm masses following, swept over the moon, and, ere it passed, the watchers had slipped past the sentries and gone a hundred yards beyond them. Then a brief interval of light, and once more they crouched among the deep shadows.

Darkness once again, the swish of the wind in the tree-tops, and then Loom! three cannon shots in rapid succession, a long, rolling volley, another and another. A low, wrathful muttering in the sky, and, with a monstrous crash, the angry thunder roared defiance at the struggling hosts below. Clap upon clap, blinding flash upon blinding flash, boom upon boom, volley upon volley, and in the midst of the infernal din the scouts hurried forward with light hearts, for Adrian had passed the word: "A sortie, or an attack upon the trenches. We shall get through in the confusion."

Not yet though. One by one they slipped past the sentries lining the ravine, and now they began to climb the rocky, tree-grown sides; for the roar of battle increased at every step and the fortifications could not now be very far away. A stone rolled from under the feet of one of the climbers.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Adrian wriggled out of the load he bore and passed it to the man immediately behind him.

"Keep still," he breathed. "I will find out how many there are. If I don't come back, move a little to the right, and then go straight on. That is your road."

He mounted slowly, an inch at a time, until he could hear the breathing of the sentry. Then he stopped, bracing his muscles for the coming shock.

Flash! A lurid stream of light darted for one instant into the ravine, illuminating the crouching figure. Startled, the sentry fired and lunged wildly downwards with his bayonet as Adrian sprang at his throat.

There was a cry, a heavy fall, a brief scuffle on top of the bank, another fall, and then silence for a space.

"Are you hurt, Lieutenant?" hazarded someone.

"No," muttered Adrian. "All is clear above. This is the last of them, I should think. The shot won't be noticed in the storm. Who fell below there?"

"Tim Price. The ball took him in the leg."

"Not dead?"

"No."

"Pass him up then. We mustn't leave him."

With some difficulty the wounded man was handed up the bank, and in the darkness Adrian knelt down and bound a piece of cord tightly around the thigh above the bleeding point.

"Can one of you carry his pack?" he asked.

"Oh, I reckon yes, for all the distance we have to go now," replied someone.

"Good. Now put him up on my back. Keep a good hold, Tim. I'll go as easily as possible. Forward, the rest of you; you can move faster than I can, and you can't miss your way now. Keep well to the right, or you will get between two fires. Quick. The storm is passing and the moon may betray us presently."

"Boys," said he who had spoken first, "we'll not go a step without the Lieutenant. All together or none at all. You first, Lieutenant. We'll make a rearguard in case the Yanks follow us up. Reckon we're close to our own lines by now."

"Forward then," said Adrian impatiently. "Keep well to the right. Hold fast, Tim."

* * * * * *

The sortie had been so nearly a success that failure was all the more maddening But the Confederates were retiring and Company C, its reputation at last established, swung sullenly along in the rear, rifles cracking fitfully as it went.

The storm had ceased, the firing was dying away, everywhere the bugles were sounding the recall, and the last skirmisher of Company C had run back into line, when—What was that?

Out from the gloom of the railway embankment a number of men dashed into the strong moonlight, and charged down upon Company C. One, seemingly immensely tall, led the way. In cooler moments Company C would have seen that the appearance of height was due to the fact that he bore a wounded comrade upon his shoulders. But Company C did not stop to think.

"Fire!"

The volley crashed, and the tall man went down, his burden pitching forwards and falling helplessly beside him. Four men stopped. The rest came on with shouts and cries.

"Quit firin', you durned fools. We're friends."

A babble of voices, sharp question and quick reply, and in the midst of the confusion the Colonel rode to the rear.

"What is this?" he demanded of the foremost of the newcomers. "Who are you?"

"Corporal Smart, sir, 120th New Orleans Rig'ment. We've come from General Joe Johnston with a supply of percussion caps."

"Percussion caps! Why it is not two hours since a messenger was dispatched on that very errand. It's not possible the General could have known. How did he know? Who led you?"

The bearers had come up and laid their burden on the ground. A soldier of Company C stepped forward to look.

"Hello!" he exclaimed in astonishment, "of it ain't that durned or'nery skunk. What's he doin' here when——"

He got no further. The fist of the Corporal struck him squarely between the eyes, and he fell upon his back with a thud.

"Beg pardon, Colonel," said the Corporal. "I couldn't help it. I reely couldn't. Hyar's the Lieutenant, ez has led us all the way, an' we couldn't have got hyar 'ceptin for him, an' fer the last mile or more he's humped Tim Price along on his back. And now he's gone, Colonel, it riz my bile ter hear him called sech a name ez that. Him! Why, what's he done, any way?"

The Colonel was off his horse in a flash. But the grizzled Sergeant was before him.

"Master Adrian, sir," he groaned to the Colonel. "Oh, it's Master Adrian! Master Adrian, speak to me."

The Colonel knelt down and caught Adrian by the hand. "My poor boy!" he said. "Is it really you? And we thought——"

He stopped, looking earnestly into the still white face, whereon was set a happier smile than had been there for weeks past.

"He's not gone, Colonel," said the Sergeant huskily. "No, no, he ain't gone, an' him comin' back to his rig'ment an' all. The surgeon 'll soon bring him round. He'll git his captain's bars fer this, I should say. Yes, sir, thar's promotion waitin' fer him, I'm tellin' you."

The Colonel crossed the dead man's hands upon his breast.

"He has already been promoted—for valour," he said.

Company C marched back in silence, with arms reversed.

Sing a Song of Sixpence.

MELODY, the new musical magazine, published monthly, price sixpence, has taken a foremost place in popular favour.

And rightly so, for each number contains twelve specially selected compositions, comprising every kind of vocal and instrumental music, bes des notes and criticisms on events of interest in the musical world by R. S. Hichens and Dr Joseph Bennett.

In addition, MELODY is printed on paper full sheet-music size, and this has given it a great advantage over all other musical magazines.

The Christmas Double Number, price One Shilling, published on December 1st, will be something very special, and will contain plenty of excellent music for the long winter evenings.

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER A COPY.

Queens will have only the best of everything. Her Majesty the Queen has graciously conferred upon the manufacturers of

Sunlight Soap

by Special Royal Warrant the appointment of SOAP MAKERS TO HER MAJESTY.

SUNLIGHT SOAP is so cheap, everybody can afford to use it, in fact, as the "best is the cheapest," nobody can afford not to use it. Washes clothes, washes everything with less labour, greater comfort.

Used all over the Civilized World.

By Clive Holland.

Author of "My Japanese Wife," etc., etc.

Mousmé was reclining in a deck-chair.

Mousmé was reclining in a deck-chair—a gay-coloured butterfly at rest. As the awning flapped lazily every now and again in the air, caused by the *Eastern Queen* travelling at eighteen knots through the burnished waters of the Indian Ocean, a ray of clear sunshine fell upon her bright-hued Eastern dress, and lighted up her pretty, piquant, delicately-tinted face.

For the first few days out from Nagasaki she had been depressed—sad with memories of the mother she had left behind, and that comical elf, my little Japanese brother-in-law, Aki—frightened by the shipboard noises, and the thud of the engines pounding away in the hope of a record passage.

In our cabin at night she would cry a little softly, and then, throwing her slender arms round me, exclaim in Japanese:

"Ah, but what does it matter as long as Cy-reel is here, and mine?"

But, all the same, I know that she missed the chirp of the cicalas and the croak of the frogs, which in our home up the Nagasaki hillside used generally to be the last sounds at night we heard, and the scent of tea-roses, hyacinths, and mimosa, and the fragrance of the lotus-blossoms in our sunlit, quaintly-conceived garden, was ill-replaced by the smells of an ocean steamer and the salt scent of the tepid sea.

There were two or three Japanese students on board bound either for Leipsic, Stuttgart, or Cambridge, and a Japanese merchant, Yin-Mon, who was interested in the shipping trade, but Mousmé avoided them all. As they were friendly inclined—are not all of them going to an unknown land?—and the sense of loneliness seems to draw people of one nation together, I asked Mousmé why she made no effort to meet their advances.

"Cy-reel, they not think you marry me. Think I'm *geisha* girl. Amuse you, nothing else. See?"

"See!" was a favourite phrase of Kotmasu, my Nagasaki friend, and Mousmé had picked up this piece of *argot* with the fatal facility of a child.

"But the ring?" I said, pointing to the plain gold band shining on her slender finger which I had specially made by Ako San.

"Ah," she replied with a troubled look, "that tell them nothing," adding: "perhaps they think you no afford stones."

Then we both laughed; she because I did, and I at her quaint conceit.

We spent our days on board mostly lounging in deck chairs talking to the English passengers who, one and all, seemed charmed with Mousmé and her taking, unsophisticated ways.

"Your wife—excuse me, sir—is charming," said a bluff old Indian colonel probably on his way home to a substantial wife and grown-up family, "but she will want putting in a glass case. Yes, sir, in a glass case."

And I, as we turned near the chart-house to retrace our monotonous steps, remembering the merciful Providence which, in things matrimonial at least, seems to watch over those who do not take the advice of their friends, dissented, and replied that Mousmé was no fair-weather butterfly.

All the same, I must confess that I am liable to be somewhat disquieted by such remarks. Every day sister Lou and her stolid country-gentleman husband loom larger in the rapidly approaching future. What will *she* say? Will she even treat my marriage to Hyacinth as a *mésalliance?* Or will she treat it as merely *un page d'amour*, as I know her charitable soul, strongly tinctured with the views of Society, regards young men's "fancies"? Her last letter received ere we left Japan was not reassuring, and the one before that made mention of a possible bone of contention in the shape of "just the sort of girl you will like," which, with sisterly unwisdom, she had no doubt promptly settled in her own mind would make me an excellent wife. My chief hope was that sister Lou would accept Mousmé as a curiosity. Faint rumours had reached me, during my five years' banishment, of Lou's lion-hunting propensities, and of her Belgravian hospitality successively to a Colonial bishop with an appendage in the shape of an African chief convert formerly strongly suspected of cannibal tastes, a light weight amateur champion, a whistling lady (*sifleuse*, Lou called her), and last, but not perhaps least, a young and rising novelist.

On this particular occasion my reverie was interrupted by Mousmé's sudden appearance in the midst of the small circle of reading, working, or smoking humanity of which I formed a part.

"Cy-reel, Cy-reel, I have seen two black devils!"

The men laughed in keen enjoyment of the *naïveté*, the women in sheer sympathy, all of them, that is except a young and certainly not artless widow, who seemed to regard Mousmé's popularity on board, and the amount of male attention she obtained, as a direct insult to herself, and out of all proportion to Hyacinth's deserts. *She* smiled with the politely shocked air assumed by Society under such circumstances.

What if Mousmé's two black devils after all proved to be but stokers getting a breath of purer air at one of the iron-doorways of the engine-rooms! Her innocent remark served the purpose of amusing her admirers, and encouraging a hearty laugh with the thermometer standing at 100 degrees in the shade.

When Aden was reached, and the monotony of the steam through the canal was at an end, England seemed very near indeed. And as I noticed the amount of attention Mousmé's quaint, pretty little figure, and somewhat *bizarre* dress, attracted even at such a cosmopolitan place as Port Said, as she stood beside me under a dainty red paper umbrella, upon which three yellow dragon-like beasts sprawled, I could only speculate upon the impression her appearance would create amid the dull afternoon respectability and subdued smartness of Bond Street and Piccadilly.

As for Mousmé herself, whose piquant, porcelain-tinted face was always seeking mine, and whose small, cool, delicately-shaped hand was so fond of nestling in my rougher and inclusive palm, I think she had some faint ideas of changing her pretty, fantastic garb, peach-blossom satin *obi*, with its huge butterfly bow at the back and all, for the western dress which interested and mystified her so greatly. But I long ago decided that it would never do, and any misgivings I had at my interfering with such things were set at rest by Mousmé herself just after we had left Gibraltar.

She had become quite intimate with a pretty girl, the daughter of an ex-M.P., who was about her own age, height, and figure—that is, slight—and used to spend a good deal of her time after leaving Bombay chatting with Miss Levenson both on deck and in her cabin. One afternoon Mousmé came into our cabin, where, having nothing better to do, I was engaged in putting a few of our things together, looking like a dragon-fly shorn of its pretty iridescent wings.

"Cy-reel, Cy-reel!" she exclaimed in a tone of suppressed exultance as I looked up as the state-room door opened to admit her. "What do you think? Mees Lee-ven-son has lended" ("lent," I corrected out of sheer habit), "leent," with a tiny *moue* of impatience, "me this—this dress. What do you think?"

Mousmé was still standing in the doorway, which framed her quaint-looking little figure with its elaborately-arranged Japanese *coiffure* now so singularly out of place. She was wearing one of Miss Levenson's prettiest frocks (I more than half-suspected that young lady was peeping somewhere in the immediate vicinity to see the effect of Mousmé's transformation), a white dress of some soft clinging material with turquoise blue bows, which, however, fitted her more than passably, thanks, doubtless, to the assistance of her friend's *corsetière*.

"You look very nice," I exclaimed, after a lengthy pause of astonishment, "but I like you best in your own dress, my Mousmé."

"In my velly own?"

"Yes."

"But Mees Lee-ven-son, she say I look lovely, bee-u-ti-ful," smoothing a crease in the waist of her bodice meditatively, a shade of disappointment crossing her face.

"Yes," I agreed, "but Mousmé is a dragon-fly, pretty without its wings."

"No." And then a light broke into her mind. "Cy-reel, how velly, velly"—and then she paused—"funny you are. I like a dragon-fly without wings," surveying her straight up and down little figure critically. Then she burst out into a merry laugh, and exclaiming: "Ah, yes, *obi* is best," whisked her western skirts and petticoats through the cabin door, and disappeared in search of Miss Lee-ven-son.

A few minutes later the doorway was again darkened, and there was Mousmé in her own pretty Japanese dress, with the turquoise-blue *obi* tied in a huge bow at the back, her waist less slim, but slender enough, blowing kisses to me and smiling at my astonished face.

"Now you are the real Mousmé," I said, and she came and sat on the edge of the berth as close as she could and watched me packing, heaving her slight shoulders at her freedom from "the stiff thing that squeezed me so," as she mysteriously put it.

The *Eastern Queen* entered the Thames just two days and eighteen minutes ahead of her previous best time. The captain and first officer were very particular even as to minutes. The sinking sun turned even the Essex Marshes into things of

beauty; and I was glad, for Mousmé's sake, to whom the flatness of the prospect would have otherwise proved depressing. A big tramp steamer hooted at us, startling her, and then slowly dropped astern, the scars and rust stains on her red and black hull showing sharp and clear in the brilliant oblique sunlight.

Many other vessels were coming down the river, their masts and rigging, even in the distance, sharp and distinct against the yellowing sky; whilst further on, round the bend of the channel, lay the great city, crouching under its smoke pall, ready to engulf me and the quaint little figure at my side.

As the daylight began to die, and the shore on each side of us drawing in closer, gradually disclosed houses and riverside buildings, it became clear that the *Eastern Queen* would not get into dock till next morning. Some of the more impatient spirits and those expecting to be met by friends, having sent telegrams ashore at Gravesend, were loud in their expressions of disappointment; but for both Mousmé and me it was almost a relief. For me, sister Lou, with her possibly supercilious scrutiny of my choice, and frequently not uncaustic tongue, was ahead; for her, the, perhaps, overwhelming sense of loneliness which would come amid her new and novel surroundings.

When night had come and the engines were silent after the long voyage, and the steamer made snug for the night, Mousmé and I stood watching the yellow, luminous cloud which hung over the distant city.

"And, Cy-reel, this is England," she exclaimed, in an awestruck voice, gazing out over the rail at the reflected glare.

"Yes."

"But where are the hills, and the gardens, and the tea-houses? Are there none of these?"

"Yes, but no hills and gardens in the city."

"None!"

"But there are lovely gardens in the country, with strange flowers and hills, too. Are you disappointed, Mousmé?"

"Cy-reel, why you guess what I feel?" Slipping her hand through my arm, resting on the rail. "A little feared that is all. It is your England, and I have come to it with you. I your wive—no, not that, what?"—wife, I suggested—"wife," she repeated, "and you my husband. So it all right. See! *tout va bien*, as Mees Bonjour tell me!" this with a little laugh.

"Yes; all is right, darling, but you are cold." A puff of chill grey night air from across the water made her shiver against me.

'There is Miss McLeod singing in the saloon. Hark! Yes; 'tis 'The Land o' the Leal.' Let us go down."

There was a certain sadness brooding over the company in the saloon, many pleasant friendships were now almost at an end, some faces grown familiar were absent, some of our fellow voyagers had already gone ashore in the tender at sunset, and others were in the last throes of packing, and to-morrow with its partings and going of various ways threw its gloom over the company. But for the collection for the men, and the effort to be witty of the inevitable speech-maker of the party we should have been duller still, for all the songs were sad, and as Mousmé and I went along the passage to our cabin early the strains of "The Last Watch" followed us, and seemed to haunt me and penetrate through the little narrow white, gold-beaded door after I had shut it.

The electric light shone on Mousmé's little ivory Buddha with its calm, unemotional face sitting on its lacquer bracket fastened against the cabin panelling in the corner. "Heathenish!" Sister Lou would doubtless say, but Mousmé's childish prayers travelled further than to the deaf ears of the image, and I had not the heart to say her nay when she produced it with marked reverence from the depths of one of her fragile lacquer boxes. The cabin, now destitute of all the pretty *bric-à-brac* trifles of Japan which Mousmé in her desire to make it home-like had placed about regardless of risk of damage, bore eloquent witness of the fact that we were at the end of the voyage. I fell asleep regarding the Buddha, which still stared down from its bracket, my mind full of plans for the future.

"And, Cy-reel, this is England."

The thud of the donkey engine, steam winches running none too easily after their disuse of months, the noise of tramping feet, and the slow movement of the huge vessel awakened us. By the time we got dressed and on deck, many of our friends and acquaintances had succeeded in getting ashore. Several, however, had waited to say good-bye, and Miss Levenson was one of these.

"You will be sure to come to see me at Cumberland Gate, won't you?" she said to Mousmé.

Mousmé glanced inquiringly at me. I smiled.

"Yes; Mees Lee-ven-son, some day. I shall be velly—we shall be velly glad," she replied.

"But some day never comes," laughed Miss Levenson, "you must promise to come soon. My sisters will be delighted to see you, though my little one—Nadige—will never believe that you are not a charming figure off a screen or vase. But good-bye."

"Soon, velly soon," exclaimed Mousmé a little forlornly, as they kissed one another. "Mees Lee-ven-son, I don't want you to go right away."

"You silly girl," was the reply. Then, joyfully: "Why, there's mother and Nadige! Come and see me very soon." To me: "Be sure you bring her."

We watched her vanish amid the little knot of people gathered around the shore end of the gangway, and then we ourselves made our way ashore.

Mousmé was very quiet in the train up to town. The serried rows of solid, squalid houses we passed, the dullness and immensity of the various buildings both astonished and oppressed her.

"Do people really live in those places?" she asked as the train halted for a moment opposite a dingy court.

"Yes."

"Shall we?" with a sharp shiver of anticipatory disgust.

"No, Mousmé. They are poor people. *Rikisha* men, *djins*, *sampan* men, and those sort of people" I added in explanation.

"But, so velly dirty," she argued with recollections of the almost universal daily bath of all classes in Japan. "Nata San" (her cousin, the poor *sampan* man, whom her mother always kept in the background as being a detrimental) "no dirty. Him *sampan* man too."

It seemed useless to attempt to explain, and so I turned the conversation.

A few minutes later the train slowed into the station, and Mousmé and I were at last in London.

The horse was almost an unknown animal to Mousmé. In fact, during my five years' residence in Nagasaki, I scarcely remember having seen one.

The hansom might pass muster as a substantial and enlarged edition of a *rikisha*, but the strange-looking four-legged animal whose iron shod hoofs struck upon the asphalte with a resounding click, bore no family likeness to the bare-legged, silent-footed *djins* who run between the slender bamboo shafts with amiable faces as if they enjoyed it.

In a letter posted at Suez, I had told Lou we should put up at the Savoy on our arrival, pending the acquisition of a flat or house. I was not, therefore, surprised to find a letter awaiting me.

I read it in the vast second-floor chamber which had been allotted to us, substantial, imposing, almost terrifying to Mousmé, with its huge brass bedstead fit for a giant. How different from our thin, soft beds spread on the snowy matting covering the floor, jealously guarded by tent-like mosquito curtains of blue gauze in our far-off home on the Nagasaki hillside.

Lou's attitude was much as I had anticipated. Her letter ran:

Horsham Hall, Bucks.

MY DEAR CYRIL,—I received your letter after some slight delay—it being addressed to Pont Street, whilst we, as you see, are down here.

I am longing to see you, but you are really too bad! I had such a nice girl in my mind's eye for you. Can you be serious? Or are you playing one of those delightful but terribly inconsiderate practical jokes off on me which you used to favour when at Marlborough in the old days? I sincerely trust the latter, as you know I have a great aversion to foreign women, except American girls *with money*. But, of course, *they* are not foreigners, only some of them speak with an unusual accent. If the former, and you have proved the first of the family for several generations to contract a *mésalliance*, you may not get on together. I have heard dreadful rumours of the laxity of marriage relations in Japan [I gave a snort of indignation here which caused Mousmé to look up with a startled glance from her unpacking], and you may be able to get out of the affair without much difficulty. Anyway, you might consult Sir Marmaduke Briefbag, who has got several lady and men friends of ours through the Court quite nicely. Really, people in Society seem to think nothing of it nowadays.

But I am forgetting what I was really writing to say. Both Stanmere and I will be delighted to see you as soon as you can come; and if *she* is still with you, of course, you must bring her. If you are not really married—that is, according to our notions—be sure she has a ring, as the girls are home from school (Irene has finished), and on account of the servants.

With love from me and kindest regards from Stanmere,

Ever your loving sister,

LOU.

Mousmé was, not unnaturally, curious as to the contents of the letter. But to read it to her was, of course, out of the question. I remembered the preconceived notions of the evanescent character of most Anglo-Japanese unions which she had possessed prior to our marriage in common with my queer little mother-in-law and her lady friends.

Poor little Mousmé! She might misunderstand Lou's reference to getting out of it, and think I was wishing to abandon her. So I merely said:

"It is rather a stupid letter from Lou. She wants us to go down into the country—where the gardens are—to see her and my little nieces. Irene is about your age, you ought to get on, *etre amis de cœur*. She used to be a nice child five years ago. But you'll have to get a few things before we go down to Horsham."

"Things?"

"Yes. Things to wear."

"Won't these do?" she asked with wide open eyes, questionly pointing to the rich, gay coloured garments of silk, satin, and brocade which lay spread out on the bed and across the one or two available chairs.

"Yes, but you will not be able to go about bare-headed, and the cap you used to wear on the steamer will not do in London."

And then I remembered with a shock that she would require many things, that she had no shoes even, and that the *peignoirs*, like garments of blue muslin, which in Japan are the night robes *de rigueur*, would not do here, at Horsham, or in town. In fact, that a woman's experienced taste would be invaluable at this crisis—Lou's advice even welcome. In my predicament I determined to boldly venture upon the purchase of a pair of shoes and a bonnet, to run the gauntlet of the chambermaids' criticism and possible disapproval of the blue muslin *peignoirs* for at least one night, and then throw myself upon Miss Levenson's good nature.

I told Mousmé we would go and see her friend to-morrow, and ask her to come shopping with us. With great delight she hung up and packed away her multitudinous garments in the wardrobe cupboards and the chest of drawers, and tidied her hair, which had become somewhat disarranged whilst unpacking, standing before the long panel-glass of the capacious wardrobe, a quaint little figure in a peach-coloured dress with wide hanging sleeves and a green silk *obi* delicate of tint swathing her supple form and tied in the inevitable big bow.

"Are you ready, Cy-reel?" she exclaimed at length, sticking a long, jade-headed pin in her hair, which she had purchased at Aka San's, the jeweller in Mimosa Street, the night before we left Nagasaki, and then swinging round in a patch of August sunlight to see that all her other pins and the big bow of her *obi* were as they should be.

"Yes," I said, taking her in my arms with a sudden enthusiasm for her daintiness, whilst she, struggling, pushed my face away, lest I should disturb the symmetry of her beautifully arranged hair.

"Kiss me," when I had put her down. "But velly careful kiss." Her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed.

Then we started out on our travels. Sinking, much to Mousmé's dismay, "down the well" (as she put it) to the ground floor of the hotel.

If Mousmé had proved an object of some interest and admiration to the lift man and the hall-porter, and the knot of visitors awaiting the coming of friends in the spacious lobby of the hotel, she was even more so to the loungers and passers-by in Regent Street.

We alighted from our hansom at the corner of the Circus. The afternoon was fine, and Mousmé intreated me to let her inspect the "much velly great shops" in a more satisfactory manner than from the interior of a jolting swaying *rikisha*, as she yet called the hansom.

Fortunately, as it proved, Madame Cicely Gray's was not far along the street.

"A jolly pretty girl, I say," audibly exclaimed a curly-headed public school boy.

"What a scrap. An absurd doll," with a shrill Society giggle, I overheard a smartly-dressed woman remark with no play of expression on her enamelled face, superior in the possession of fashionably golden hair and a figure verging upon the unnecessarily opulent.

"Charming. Piquant. What a lovely, strange little face," observed a pretty, fresh-looking girl seated in a Victoria drawn close to the kerb, against the wheels of which we were almost driven to a standstill by the vagaries of a blind man with his dog.

Things were getting decidedly embarrassing. Even a small crowd was threatening to gather. One of those curious little well-dressed crowds that pester Royalty and lesser celebrities, and which is often possessed of scarcely the manners and none of the reverence of an ill-dressed mob. Mousmé was getting a little frightened, too. The clatter and rumble of the vehicles, the confused murmur of

noises, the mysterious odds and ends of conversation of passers-by served to make her cling close to my side like a child entering a room full of strangers. We ought to have driven right up to Madame Cicely Gray's, whose handsome plate-glass windows, with her name straggling across them in white autograph letters caught my eye in the nick of time.

Madame Gray's was "exclusive," so Miss Levenson had told me when recommending her to Mousmé. Adding, "that means the articles displayed in her windows may be counted on the fingers of both hands." Her latest models were

It suited Mousmé to perfection.

inside, jealously guarded from the lynx-eyed lady journalist in search of material for her "Fashion Letter." This prepared me for the disappointing absence of show in the windows.

We passed through the heavy swing doors, and Mousmé, being a woman, was in Paradise. I, in a mild sort of Hades of bashfulness.

Really Madame Gray's chief assistant must have been an artist.

"Yes, I know exactly, sir," in reply to my somewhat incoherent statement of Mousmé's requirements, whom she treated as a pretty child.

In a minute or two from a show-case was produced a something which settled itself swiftly upon Mousmé's shapely little head.

Something with a minus quantity of body, like a butterfly with wings partially closed. Something which "threw up" the colour in her delicately tinted cheeks, and gave her a charming air of small-sized dignity.

"Madame must dress her hair a trifle lower at the back, just a trifle. And then it will be perfect. So."

Two of the pins were withdrawn, and the alteration deftly made.

"What do you think?" turning to me.

"Quite so. It is all right now," I rejoined, with a desire to agree cordially with what I did not really comprehend.

"A hat? Certainly. But Madame must have a toque. This is pretty."

It suited Mousmé to perfection.

I paid for the bonnet and toque, her eyes wide open at the outgoing of the English equivalent "for so velly much *yen*." The toque is to be sent to the Savoy, the bonnet she wears without an appearance of incongruousness.

We seemed to attract less observation than before, and so I ventured to cross to the other side of the street, and we walked along up towards Oxford Circus, looking in the shop windows.

Mousmé's remarks on men and things kept me thoroughly amused. Everything was so wonderful to her, and her observations were, in consequence, ingenuous and immensely entertaining.

Next day we called upon the Levensons. With Mousmé they were all charmed. The footman had been suitably, if discreetly, astonished when he opened the door. I could almost fancy that he regarded the little figure in its bright-coloured foreign dress as that of an untimely masquerader. But his attitude had quite changed by the time he had to show us out, for he said:

"Mind the top step, madame. It's rather awkward for a lady."

Mousmé smiled and said: "Thank you velly much."

And the ghost of a smile for an instant illuminated even his accurately-set features.

The next day Miss Levenson and Mousmé went shopping, the former by no means averse to an expedition which would doubtless afford her amusement.

Mousmé returned triumphant and with parcels innumerable, the contents of which Miss Levenson, at her request, hastened to assure me were all necessary.

"I have spent velly much *yen*," said Mousmé, turning her face up to mine with a half-frightened and deprecatory look in her soft eyes.

"But I'm sure you'll like what we've bought," said Miss Levenson cheerfully. "Everyone is in love with Mousmé. She is such a dear to dress. But we must adjourn for our dress rehearsal. Fancy," laughing and speaking to Mousmé, "having to teach a big girl how to put her clothes on." Then, noticing that her face fell a little: "Come, there's a dear."

Mousmé's blue gauze sleeping robes were laid aside that night for good and all, and it was a white, ghostly little figure which flitted about the room in place of the powder-blue elf of far-off Japan.

"Cy-reel," she said in charming perplexity next morning, "Miss Lee-ven-son tell me velly plain how things go." Adding, with a little grimace of despair: "It's all gone away. I've forgot everything. 'Right away,' as Mees J. Bronson Hamer, from City and State of New York, used to be always saying. Whatever shall I do? My *tabi* (stockings) have no toes."

But, after all, Mousmé managed to manipulate her newly-adopted European garments very well. And then, slipping on her Japanese over-dress of delicately tinted flowered silk, and tying an *obi* of some complimentary colour into the huge fantastic bow she loved around her waist, she was ready.

Two days later we journeyed down to Horsham Hall by the afternoon train, so as to arrive in time for dinner. Past large commons, blazing with amber gorse, charming to Mousmé with her love for gay colours, through hills, in the hollows of which bluish, opalescent shadows were already beginning to gather.

For both of us Sister Lou loomed at the end of the journey.

"Cy-reel, I hope she is not velly big," said Mousmé, after I had told her there was but a station or two now before the one for Horsham Hall. Bigness was to her oppressive and terrible, because unusual. In her Japanese home everything had been slight, delicate, and small.

No, Lou was not in reality big, although there was something in her manner which I feared would be none the less terrifying to Mousmé. That was if Sister Lou did not "take to her."

As we drove up through the avenue of elms and beeches Mousmé nestled close to me. The leaves of the topmost branches were reddening with the sunset. Through a gap in the end of the avenue lay the Hall, old, solid, grey, ivy and moss-grown; also flushing in the last moments of the dying day. Mousmé had never seen such gigantic trees. She would delight more in the fantastically trimmed yews and boxes of the old walled garden behind the left wing of the house. Poor little Mousmé.

The hall itself, with its thick grey walls and deep-set mullioned windows, would strike her at first with a chill as of a prison-house. What a contrast to our fragile little Japanese home, through the thin walls of which the various sounds of garden life used to penetrate, competing with the soft voices of Oka the cook's numerous contented progeny.

Lou met us at the door of the big, old-fashioned drawing-room. In the background, in the half-dusk, I could see a tall slight girl, evidently Irene, hovering over a small table, idly turning over the leaves of a book.

"Cyril, my dear boy, is it really you?" kissing me. And then turning to her:

"And this is Mousmé?"

Mousmé said: "Yes," and her soft voice seemed to travel no further than Lou.

"Well, my dear," Lou continued, "we must try to make you happy."

Could my discreet, not to say proud and cautious sister, have already been won over by Mousmé's pretty upturned face and pleading eyes? Or was her comparative graciousness but the equivalent of an armed neutrality?

"Irene, come and speak to your uncle Cyril. This is Mousmé."

The tall, elegant girl, who I scarcely recognised as my short-frocked somewhat tomboy niece of five years ago, came forward, smiling a welcome at me, and regarding Mousmé (who of course was her new aunt) curiously but not unkindly.

"So you're Uncle Cyril!" she exclaimed, putting her hand somewhat shyly in mine, and gazing into my sun-tanned face.

"Yes," I replied. "Sun, you see, Irene, is not good for the complexion. Mine has evidently suffered."

She blushed at my detection of her thoughts, and then we both laughed and Mousmé smiled a little, uncomprehending smile, breaking the ice between us three at least.

"And this is Mousmé," she continued. "What am I to call you?" stooping and kissing her. "Aunt Mousmé, it is very pretty."

"I tink you velly well call me Mousmé. I call you—I-r-e-n-e."

"A bargain," rejoined the latter, with a flash of her impulsive fourteen-year-old manner.

All this time Lou was, I felt, scrutinising Mousmé with a view to forming an opinion about her,—one of those terrible opinions which are frequently but another way of spelling prejudices.

Lou had always been fond of me, and had accepted me with my sunburn, and now somewhat out-of-date English manners, furbished up since leaving Japan, without ado. As she would doubtless have phrased it, she knew who my grandfather was, and brown skinned or white, nothing could alter that all-satisfying fact.

Irene had given Mousmé some tea in shell porcelain cups, which approached in size sufficiently near the diminutive ones of her native land to appear quite homelike. From Lou's well-bred and somewhat vacant expression, I could gather little as regarded her verdict upon my wife. The two girls were getting on famously, Mousmé meeting her niece's advances with a grave little air, and talking in a pretty jargon of English-Japanese-French which caused the latter much amusement, as I could easily see.

At last a gong sounded through the yellow twilight stillness, hardly less clangorous than that of the Shinto monastery which lay down below our Japanese home on the fair Nagasaki hillside.

Mousmé started, and I could see from her face that the tone of the gong had aroused tender memories of balmy, luminous nights spent on our fragile, bamboo balcony, watching the harbour lights and the moon climbing slowly up into the indigo sky.

"We must dress," exclaimed Lou in a decisive tone of voice. "Stanmere will be in shortly, and he doesn't like to be kept waiting. Irene, you can have Jephson to-night when she has helped me dress, and Mousmé can have Marie to assist her."

Mousmé threw an appealing glance in my direction. She did not wish for Marie's assistance it was evident. There would, indeed, be very little that was elaborate about her toilet; nothing that her own skilful fingers could not easily accomplish. Besides, I had a faint idea of having heard or read that "the tender mercies of the fashionable are cruel," and this might mean in Mousmé's case that she would be screwed, willing or not, into one of Irene's dinner dresses by the punctilious Marie anxious to make her conform to fashion's dictates.

"And this is Mousmé."

"I think she can manage quite well, Lou," I remarked, "it would be a pity to interfere with either your own or Irene's comfort."

"Oh! that doesn't matter at all. Mousmé must p'ease herself, but Marie would put out her things, and save a lot of time. There isn't much to spare, and girls take such a while to dress without a maid."

Dear Lou, I thought, you little know how simple a matter dressing is to Mousmé, not yet used to the undress elaboration of dinner toilette demanded by Society.

Lou was impatient to be off, I could see. She scarcely waited for my reply, but added as she left the room: "Do as you like, of course," in a whisper which told me plainly enough that she feared the worst—that Mousmé's unassisted toilet would cast discredit upon her dinner-table.

Whilst Mousmé was dressing—putting on a semi-Japanese Liberty robe of turquoise silk, ornamented with gold embroidery and pearls which had been one of Miss Levenson's purchases, Lou's probable style of costume obtruded itself upon my imagination. She never did things by halves. She was absolutely the most fashionable woman I have ever met. What she wore was "the Fashion," and she changed the colour of her hair and contour of her figure with every whim of the fickle goddess almost as easily as one would a glove. Remembering the extent of arms and shapely shoulders she considered it necessary to exhibit to enable her to feel dressed for dinner, I thought it well to prepare Mousmé.

"Mousmé," I said as she stood putting the finishing touches to her hair, a dainty

1896 PROCLAMATION!

"OH, YES. REVENUES FROM ECONOMY ARE ENORMOUS."

The **RICHEST PROVISION** in **KNOWLEDGE** made **ABSOLUTELY** easy for the **ACCUMULATION** of this **INCOME**. Write to Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son, Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, who will provide you with full information, posting you free (if when writing you mention this Paper) a large, amazingly interesting, valuable, instructive, and detailed illustrated "Pioneer" Reduction Catalogue, showing Eclipse, and Alarm Carpets and Hearthrugs (Regd.). Also Blankets, Curtains, Sheetings, &c., and a thousand other Articles wanted in every Household. (Copyright.)

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy, from all parts of the Empire.

H.R.H. Prince Louis of Battenberg
H.R.H. Prince K. Bigit, Siam
Marquis of Breadalbane
Marquise de Biddle Cope
Lord Farnham
Lord Henry Fitzgerald
Lord Lee
Sir Henry de Bathe
Sir Henry Bellingham
Sir E. H. Blair, Bart.
Sir L. Lacon
Sir R. Cayley
Sir Samuel Hayes
Sir Charles S. King, Bart.
Sir F. Pollock
Sir Walter Simpson
Sir Howard Grubb
Sir H. V. Gidd
The Knight of Glin
Archbishop of York
Very Rev. Dean Ferguson
Bishop of Capetown
Dean of Killaloe
Dean of Bangor

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" CARPETS. (Registered.)

Archdeacon Bruce
Archdeacon Rawstorne
Very Rev. Canon Columb
Rev. Canon Dodd
Rev. Canon Macdonald
Hon. and Rev. T. Markham
Rev. Canon Henderson
Rev. Canon Barrett
Dean Carrington
Ven. Archde'con of Kilmore
Ven. Archdeacon Wright
Archdeacon of Aghadoe
Archdeacon Long
Archd'on of Dromore, D.D.
Archdeacon of Ossory
Archdeacon Wolseley
Rev. Canon Tate
Rev. Canon Whitford
Rev. Canon Upperton
Rev. Canon W. W. Kirby
Rev. Canon Kinsman
Canon Prothero
Rev. Dr. Nelson
Rev. Dr. Banks
Lady Clayton

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HEARTHRUGS. (Registered.)

Lady Hammond Gravel
Lady Beatrice Stewart
Lady Granville Gordon
Lady Hunter Blair
Lady De L'Isle and Dudley
Lady Bull
Lady Helps
Lady Barkly
Lady Bates
Lady Adelaide Cadogan
Lady Cunningham
Lady Clermont
Lady C. Crichton
Lady Warren
Lady Scott
Lady Scratchley
Lady Brooke
Lady Bute
Lady Pryse
Lady Loring
Lady A. Sherson
Lady L. Warner
Lady Macdonald
Lady Hylton
Lady Evelyn Courtenay
Lady Ormathwaite
Lady E. Hope
Lady Croft
Lady Nugent
Lady Sotheby
Lady Rawlinson
Lady Annie Lloyd
Lady Adye
Lady Helen Macgregor
Lady Samson

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" CARPETS. (Registered.)

AH! AH! The MILDNESS of the SEASON HAS DONE THIS.

100,000 Ladies' Luxuriously Handsome Rich Dark Brown **OPOSSUM FUR NECKLETS** Sale Price **4/6** Each.

With Life Imitation Natural Head combined: a most elegant and soft Worth treble fur, quite equalling in style anything offered at 15s. 6d. each, and for durability not to be surpassed. Similar to illustration.

Sale Price **4/6** Each. Worth treble.

THE *P.W.* XMAS NO. SPECIAL NECKLET COUPON. 25/12/96.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as annexed (carriage free this week only) to your address in any part of the United Kingdom.

Cash returned in full if not satisfied. (Signed) **F. HODGSON & SON.**

All Orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

GIGANTIC SALE OF THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HOUSEHOLD

Sale Price **2/-** **HEARTHRUGS** *(Regd.)* Sale Price **2/-**

In Reversible Rich Turkey Patterns, measuring 6ft. long and 3ft. wide. These Hearthrugs have gained a world-wide reputation for Magnificence, Cheapness, and Utility, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of *repeat orders* and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 for 5s. 9d., 6 for 11s. 3d., 12 for 22s.

A new design in the "Queen's Royal" Reversible Hearthrugs. Leading designs for this season are a revival of old Indian Art Colours, Anglo-Persian, and subdued Turkish and Oriental shades (Copyright Registered). If this design is wanted, kindly quote Registered No. 268,190.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

GIGANTIC SALE OF THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HOUSEHOLD REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERN

Trade Mark on all goods. Beware of Imitations. **CARPETS** (Regd.) Trade Mark on all goods. Beware of Imitations.

Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

6ft. by 9ft., sale price	... 9s. 6d.	10½ft. by 12ft. sale price	... 20s. 6d.
8ft. by 9ft.	,, ... 11s. 6d.	12ft. by 12ft.	,, ... 22s. 6d.
6ft. by 12ft.	,, ... 12s. 6d.	9ft. by 15ft.	,, ... 21s. 6d.
9ft. by 9ft.	,, ... 13s. 6d.	12ft. by 13½ft.	,, ... 25s. 6d.
9ft. by 10½ft.	,, ... 15s. 6d.	12ft. by 15ft.	,, ... 28s. 6d.
9ft. by 12ft.	,, ... 17s. 6d.	12ft. by 18ft.	,, ... 33s. 6d.
9ft. by 13½ft.	,, ... 19s. 6d.	12ft. by 21ft.	,, ... 38s. 6d.

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE REAL BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS,

Sale Price **5/6** In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight, and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable. Sale Price **5/6**

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-.

Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.

The Right Honourable the Viscountess Melville writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39s., one ditto 60s. 6d., to match them. Cheque inclosed."

Milford-on-Sea, January 18th, 1896.—Mrs. Coles writes: "We received the Velvet Pile Brussels Carpet to-day, and are very pleased indeed with it. Please send me other goods as per inclosed."

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS

Extraordinarily Heavy, very best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra-cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome Border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years, and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST.

VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	4½ft. by 7 ft. ... 11s.	VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	9ft. by 12 ft. ... 38s.
	6 ft. by 9 ft. ... 18s.		11ft. by 12 ft. ... 47s.
	7½ft. by 9 ft. ... 23s.		12ft. by 13½ft. ... 59s.
	9 ft. by 9 ft. ... 28s.		12ft. by 16 ft. ... 69s.
	9 ft. by 10½ft. ... 33s.		12ft. by 18 ft. ... 77s.

Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel of excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS. 100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS (Regd.)

SALE PRICE **2/11** EACH.

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS. This Gigantic offer is a Special Contract made with readers of *P.W. Xmas No.* only. WE WILL FORWARD DIRECT FROM THE LOOMS TO ANY ADDRESS ON RECEIPT OF AMOUNT A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, THE LARGEST EVER SOLD AT THE PRICE. Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double the above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet 1½d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER.—2 Carpets and 2 Rugs, 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly examine and compare these Carpets.

Hedge End Vicarage, Botley, Southampton, January 25th.—Mrs. Payne writes: "I am very much pleased with the Carpets, which arrived safely, and therefore inclose a further order, with P.O. for same."

Llanddulas, Abergelo, February 3rd.—H. Pipon, Esq., writes: "I have received the Carpets and Rugs to-day, and think them very satisfactory. Please execute the inclosed order, for which remittance is sent."

In the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division), HODGSON v. WEBB BROS.—On the 18th day of July, 1890, his lordship, Mr. Justice Chitty, granted an interim injunction restraining Messrs. Webb Brothers, of Hackney Wick, from infringing Mr. Frederick Hodgson's Trade Mark, "Eclipse," No. 93,774 (Leeds).

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS. 100,000 'ECLIPSE' CARPETS (Regd.)

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

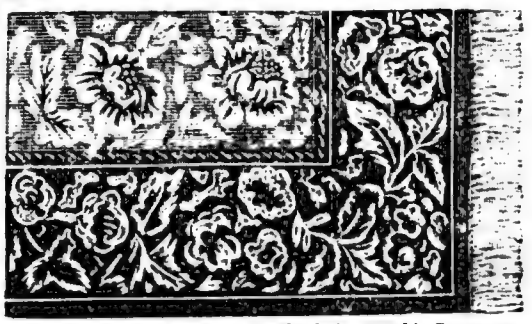
This Gigantic offer is a special contract made with readers of *P.W. Xmas. No.* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address, on receipt of amount, **A GENUINE WOVEN SEAMLESS REVERSIBLE CARPET**, in our New (regd.) Waterlilly and Persian designs, suitable for sitting-room or bedroom, bordered and woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profits. Remember, these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. An "Eclipse" Rug sent with Carpet 1s. extra.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

Kilkea Castle, Mageny, co. Kildare, August 17th. Lady EVA FITZGERALD writes: "The 'Eclipse' Carpets supplied by Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son—her ladyship is much pleased with them."

SPECIAL OFFER.—Two Carpets and Two Rugs, 8s.; or Four Carpets and Four Rugs, 15s. 6d. Value unequalled in the annals of advertising. As a favour, kindly examine and compare these Carpets.

Satisfaction Guaranteed. Do not miss this opportunity. It may not occur again.



P.S.—When this "Eclipse" Design (Regd.) is wanted in Carpets or Hearthrugs as above, kindly quote No. 268,493.

OUR NEW VENTURE!

Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One. (Copyright.) Whereas in launching forth our New Production, THE "PRUDENTIAL" CARPETS AND HEARTHRUGS, we beg to state they will have a rich Turkish and Persian Design on one side, and on the reverse the elegant and costly designs of Wilton make. The advantage thus gained is great, as they can be utilised in various rooms at one cost. This is a valuable step in economy.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE 'PRUDENTIAL' Reversible CARPETS

(Registered).

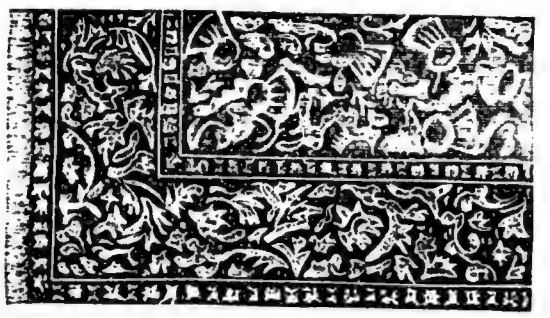
Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout, with handsome Border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 12 sizes only. These Carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

REDUCED SALE PRICES:

6ft. by 9ft.,	each. 4/9	9ft. by 10½ft.,	each. 8/6	9ft. by 15ft.,	each. 12/6	12ft. by 15ft.,	each. 15/9
7½ft. by 9ft.,	5/11	9ft. by 12ft.,	9/6	12ft. by 12ft.,	12/9	12ft. by 18ft.,	19/6
9ft. by 9ft.	7/6	10½ft. by 12ft.,	11/6	12ft. by 13½ft.,	14/6	12ft. by 21ft.,	22/6

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.—Lady HUNTER BLAIR writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions 9ft. by 10½ft.? Cheque inclosed."



P.S.—When this "Prudential" Design is wanted in Hearthrugs or Carpets, as above, kindly quote Registered No. 268,496.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy, from all parts of the Empire.

H.I.H. Eugènie de Christoforo
Princess Paleologue Nicephorœ-Commeno
Princess de Croy
Dow.-Mar. of Londonderry
Dow.-Mar. of Downshire
Duchess of Wellington
Duchess of Richmond
Marchioness of Breadalbane
Marchioness of Hastings
Marchioness of Drogheda
Marchioness of Bute
Countess Dowager Lady Thomas
Countess Dow. of Morton
Dow. Countess of Rodern
Dow. Countess of Clancarty
Countess of Ashburnham
Countess of Mar & Kellie
Countess of Effingham
Countess of Ferriers
Countess of Lanesborough
Countess of Craven
Countess of Yarborough
Countess of Winchilsea
Countess of Haddington
Countess of Aberdeen
Countess of Lichfield

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HEARTHRUGS. (Registered.)

Viscountess Halifax
Viscountess of Trafalgar
Baroness Le Linden
Baroness de Ponmeyrie
Baroness de Rottenburg
Dowager Lady Abercromby
Dowager Lady Aylesford
Right Hon. Lady Martin Kenne
Countess Kearney
Countess Cowley
Countess Lintzow
Countess of Westmeath
Countess of Mayo
Viscountess Torrington
Viscountess Molesworth
Viscountess of Hereford
Rev. Canon Hurst
Rev. Canon Thornton
Rev. Canon Mather
Rev. Canon Cooper
Rev. Canon Hamilton
Rev. Canon Tottenham
Rev. Canon Dudgeon
Rev. Canon Bush
Rev. Canon Were

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" CARPETS. (Registered.)

Lady Dixie
Lady Queensbury
Lady E. Heneage
Lady Darnley
Lady Legard
Lady Claud Hamilton
Lady Caroline Kaye
Lady Rose
Lady Newman
Lady Hewitt
Lady Fowke
Lady F. Buckby
Lady Mary Fielding
Lady Coleridge
Lady Muro
Lady Mary Skrine
Lady Monck
Lady Grant Duff
Lady Pigott
Lady Lees
Lady Gillespie
Lady Moore
Lady Garrock
Lady Leeds
Lady Thompson
Lady Anne Lyon
Lady H. Amory
Lady Aylmer
Lady Parker
Lady Theresa Boyle
Lady Morris
Lady Pauncefote
Lady Taylor

THE "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HEARTHRUGS. (Registered.)

Pearson's Weekly Xmas No. **CARPET COUPON.** 25/12/96.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom.

Cash returned in full if not satisfied. (Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg.) to match Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra; size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—Three Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or Six for 8s.; or Twelve for 15s. 6d.

We rely upon Spontaneous Repeat Orders from our clients for the maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century.

All Orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post.

Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." Telephone No. 948. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SON, *Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,* WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

little blue clad figure, with a smooth, rounded throat rising from the collarless neck of her gown, "in England women like Lou and Irene, when they are dressed, as they call it, wear astonishingly little on their arms and shoulders. Don't express any surprise; it would not be polite."

"Velly well, Cy-reel; I know. Just like that lady at the theatre the other night I thought had come there too quick, and had forgot" ("forgotten," I corrected) "forgotten to put her upper dress on—the funny lady who, when she leant forward, I thinked would break just so, like a joss-stick. Or else," added Mousmé with grave deliberation, "she never growed right."

When we entered the drawing-room I saw that sister Lou's love for display of epidermis had not become chastened with advancing years. And yet her magnificent figure, and equally distinguished toilette of crimson and black, could not kill nor detract from the delicate charm of Mousmé's simpler form and dress.

"And this is your humming-bird from the East," said Stanmere cordially, coming forward and wringing my hand.

I always liked Stanmere; now I liked him more, for I saw from his expression that he would be Mousmé's friend and ally.

"Allow me the pleasure" (slipping Mousmé's arm through his own). "Cyril, you take in Lou. Irene must follow, a maiden all forlorn to-night, as Haverstoke isn't here!"

As we filed out of the drawing room, Stanmere's towering height looked almost grotesque beside Mousmé's fairy-like figure.

"What a contrast!" voiced Lou at my side. "But really, Cyril, Mousmé is rather charming, and I'm not sure that you have made an egregious mistake after all. She may be very useful to you in Society, especially when she has learned to talk. But don't, whatever you do, let her lose her accent. It is perfectly charming—quite foreign, you know, and consequently interesting."

As for me, I let Lou ramble on through the soup right into the middle of the *entrées*. Mousmé is little likely to lose her soft accent yet awhile, and Lou may rest easy that she will in this respect for a long time conform to the usage of good society which enables many of Lou's friends to disguise the fact that they can really speak excellent English—that is, if it were the fashion to do so.

She stopped once or twice, poor little soul.

Mousmé is evidently amusing Stanmere, who laughs every now and then as if he had made a pleasant discovery. But her eyes constantly steal my way. The diamond comb in Lou's hair, and the crescent shaped brooch scintillating coyly amid the laces of her bodice have taken her dainty truant fancy, and I know what it will be when she has me alone.

"Cy-reel, I buy one all myself out of the money you give me."

And then, when I tell her "how velly much *yen*" such things cost, her eyes will lose somewhat of their almond shape in blank astonishment, and her rosebud mouth be drawn down at its corners. But she will get it all the same, because—because in fact, she is Mousmé.

Irene had evidently grown up into a charming girl, this I decided long before dessert appeared upon the table. I speculated somewhat wildly how she had so far escaped the effects of Lou's worldly-wise curriculum: no doubt existed in my mind, however, that the seeds of fashionable upbringing had been carefully sown, and would in time, now she was "out," spring up and bear fruit. But for the present at least she would form an agreeable companion for my fresh, unsophisticated little wife. At all events, she was not a New Woman, bubbling over with "sex problems," and anxious to show an "intelligent interest" in subjects tabooed by decent-minded members of her sex for centuries. I remembered Lou writing to me before we came home from Japan, and saying: "I never ask a New Woman down to Horsham Hall or to dinner at Pont Street unless she has been a good deal talked about, and then because of that, and not on account of her newness. Lots of people one *has* to know love to meet anyone who is or has done anything improper." By this time I knew Lou must have tired of even the New Woman and her vagaries, and have turned to a later brand of Society lions.

Mousmé.

"Cyril," said Stanmere, as after a cigar we were just about to join the ladies in the drawing-room, "your Mousmé is charming. She's just like a whiff of fresh morning air after—after a night at the tables at Monte. By Jove! what a contrast to the women Lou had down last autumn—champion shots of something or other. Didn't hit a bird, of course, but tramped through the turnips, splashing themselves with mud from head to foot, and soiling their fingers with the cartridges."

We stopped outside the drawing-room door. Someone was about to sing, and the soft twanging of the *samisen* told me it was Mousmé. A moment, and then her soft, small, plaintive voice trembled out into the stillness of the room. She stopped once or twice, poor little soul, as if she were about to break down. This is what she sang:

In far Japan,
Where rose and lily bloom,
My little home is left
Silent and bare as tomb.

Sunshine and shower
Across the garden sweep,
Where balmy, rustling air
Rocks lotus blooms to sleep.

Land of the rock and hill,
And wreathing mist and shine,
Flowers bloom in thee at will,
Dear loved lost land of mine.

Oh, far-off land,
Fair jewel in the sea,
Both night and day
Come in sweet dreams to me.

"It is very pretty, Mousmé," said Lou's voice, in a coldly appreciative tone, as we entered. "But your voice is not very strong, is it?"

"I call it sweet," interjected Irene warmly.

"Strong?" queried Mousmé.

"Yes; loud," Lou explained.

"No, not velly," Mousmé rejoined doubtfully. "But Cy-reel, he say quite nice 'nuf. I used to sing——" something in Lou's face must have checked the coming indiscretion, for she broke off suddenly.

"I velly tired," she said to me after a slight pause. "I wonder if they kind 'nuf to 'scuse me?"

"I feel the room and Lou swallow me up; she so velly, velly big," Mousmé exclaimed with tears in her eyes the last thing.

Lou possessed an infinite capacity, not to say genius, for giving pain and making others feel small. And yet Lou had many good qualities, mostly, alas! hidden under a bushel.

Mousmé crept into all hearts ere long, as the sunshine used to do through the fragile paper walls of our Nagasaki home, silently but not to be denied. Her dainty delight in the flower garden, which was Lou's especial care and pride, did much to soften my somewhat exacting sister's heart. Stanmere she amused and interested. Irene and the younger girls she fascinated.

At the end of the week Lou had capitulated; invitation cards for a garden party were sent for to London post haste, and issued "to meet" Mousmé and myself.

She was socially acknowledged. And I remembered gratefully one of Lou's sayings with reference to some friends of mine: "We may like them very much, but we could scarcely ask anyone to meet them."

Evidently Mousmé was no longer an unconsidered trifle.

Lou yielded gracefully, but paid no compliments till the last. Then as I bid her good-bye on the doorstep, she said, smiling: "Cyril, I am glad you married her."

"Why?"

"Because," oh, worldly wise and far-seeing Lou, "if she had not been married, young Haverstoke would never propose to Irene, I am certain."

What greater compliment could she, a mother, have paid?

A Fifty Pound Prize.

ON the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 130 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £50 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, the whole of the solutions received at *Pearson's Weekly* Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in any one day will be considered together, so that if two or more correct solutions are included in a day's post, the prize will be divided.

In the event of our receiving no correct solution on or before **December 29th**, the **Fifty-Pound Prize** will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Envelopes, containing solutions, to be marked "**Puzzle.**"

The result will appear in *Pearson's Weekly*.

YOU WILL KNOW IT BY ITS COVER.

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF "PEARSON'S MAGAZINE," Price 1s.

Ready, Tuesday, December 1st,

IS the finest thing in Christmas Numbers ever published. The beauty of the cover, with its charming design and delicate colour work, will

STRIKE YOU LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

Given away as a supplement to the number is a **delightful chromo-lithograph.**

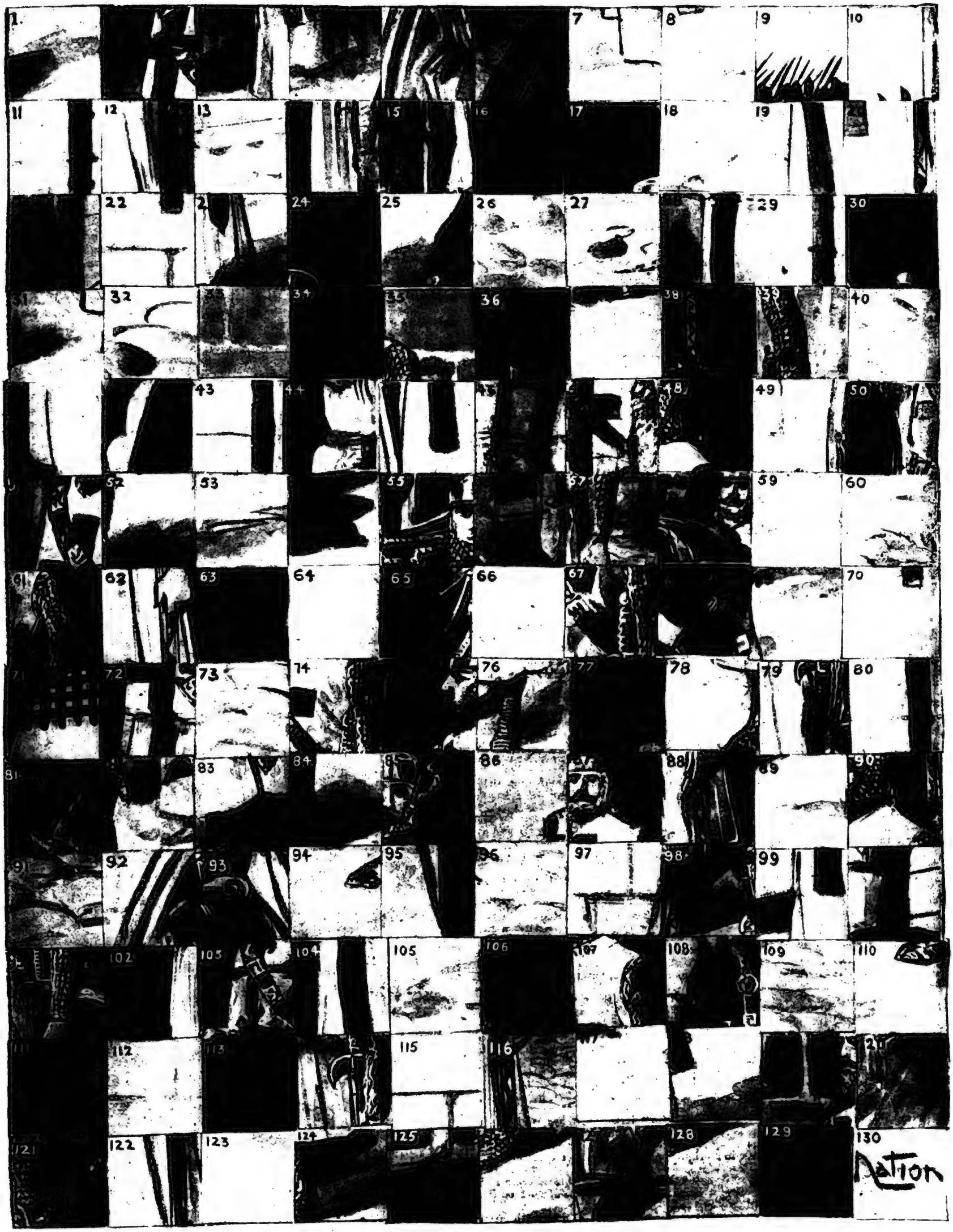
Inside the number there commences a **New Serial by RUDYARD KIPLING**, besides numerous complete stories and articles of general interest profusely illustrated.

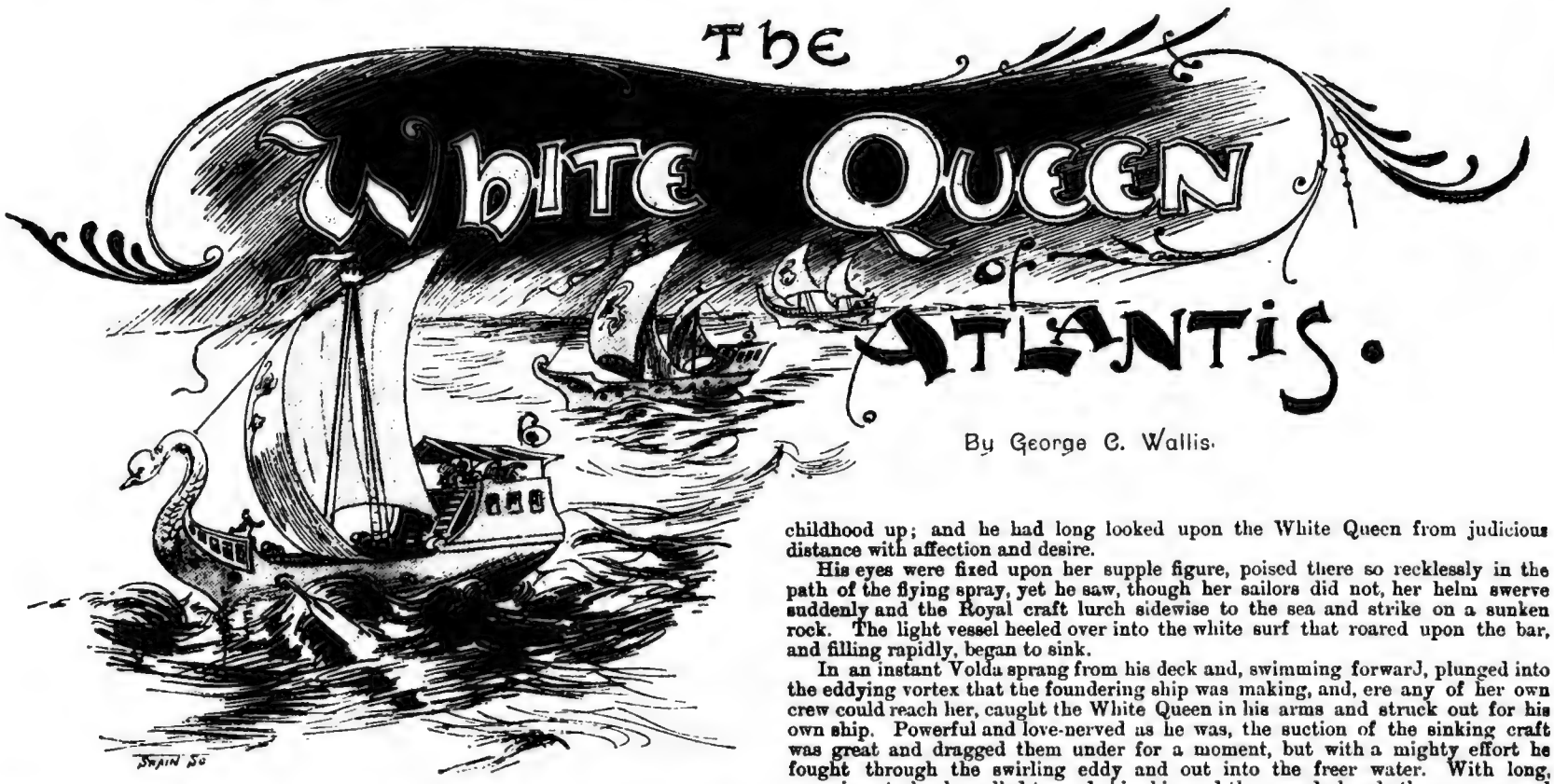
The contributors include **Harry Furniss, R. H. Sherard, W. W. Jacobs, F. T. Jane, Frankfort Moore, R. Sauber, J. F. Sullivan, J. Holt Schooling, Allen Upward, Hal Hurst, W. L. Alden, Warwick Goble,** and other well-known authors and artists.

"Ingenuity in Torture," "The English Trappists," "Royal Artists," "Fancy Dress Costumes," are a few of the many subjects treated in the **Christmas Number,** all of them in an interesting way, and with quantities of illustrations.

PUZZLE PICTURE.

(See opposite page.)





By George C. Wallis.

In the days when the world was young—ere Thotmes had made Egypt famous, and when Greece was yet in her infancy—Atlantis was neither a faint tradition nor a classic tale, but a great continent, a mighty nation, a puissant people, whose fleets swept the divided ocean from north to south, and whose prosperous colonies were planted both upon the shores of the isle-starred Gulf of Mexico, and upon the fertile coast of Africa. And in those days, about three hundred years before the waves of the Atlantic closed over the last of that glorious country, the daughter of Dulo the Second was Queen in the land.

King Dulo's reign had been a brief and warlike one, blessed by the Spirits with success on sea and land, and the soldiers grieved at first because no son had been born to him, and his daughter, the Princess Unnalala, must reign in his stead.

But when she came to the throne in the full flush of her lovely womanhood, all men were enamoured of her, and the people hailed her sway with transports of delight. They named her the White Queen because of her gentle rule and merciful judgments—which came sweet to them after the stern authority of many soldier kings—and her path through life was a path strewn deeply with the tribute-flowers of a nation's affection and esteem. When she moved abroad in state, her subjects thronged in cheering thousands, if only they might catch a glimpse of her gracious face or hear but the echo of her gentle voice; and even the most wretched criminals, for whom her mercy could find no excuse, went from her presence to the rowing holds of the warships or the copper mines of the mountains with mien less downcast than they had come before her with.

When her soldiers went to war with the barbarians of the west, or her sailors ran down the pirate ships that preyed upon her commerce, they fought as they had never fought before, and more than the wild joy of victory or the reward of success, they valued the approving smile of their beautiful Queen. Thus Atlantis grew, and prospered exceedingly, and was united in bonds of loyalty which no rebellion could ever break. For Unnalala ruled by love and not by fear, and of these two passions love is ever the stronger.

Seven years was Unnalala solitary upon the throne, and in all that time encouraged no man to love her. One only—Prince Mesano, her cousin, the only kinsman of marriageable age—had so far dared to utter his desire, and him she had answered with cold and scornful words. And to his further intreaties and to the counsels of the priests that she be wedded to him that they might have issue, and so preserve the dynasty unbroken, she listened ever with unwilling and impatient ear.

But love came unbidden to Queen Unnalala at last, and she found the man whom her heart delighted to honour. Their meeting was in this wise.

The Queen and her ladies had gone on a pleasure cruise along the coast, the Royal barque being attended by a score of large war-vessels at respectful distance. The sunny day had passed with mirth and song, but as the prows turned eastward home the sky clouded and the wind freshened to a stiff gale, and ere the harbour of Kronos, the stately, came in sight again the ships were labouring heavily in the stress of a strengthening storm.

The delicate ladies of the court, and not a few of the pampered gallants who danced attendance upon them, grew frightened at the rage of the sea, and shuddered at the shriek of the gale, and implored the sailors to hasten, but nothing the Queen heeded them.

She had been fretful and pensive by turns all through the easeful day—so dull is life at its best without love—and now that danger threatened and their idle flatteries were stayed for a time, her royal spirits rose. Disdainful of all pleading she left her dainty couch beneath the awning sail, and leapt into the bow beside the watchman, and laughed aloud a merry laugh in the teeth of the driving gale. Her kinsman, Mesano, implored her to come down to shelter, hoping then to press his suit upon her more eloquently than he had so far succeeded in doing; but she declined, and waved him back with a wayward gesture that boded ill with his mood. For he thought that never had she looked so beautiful as then, and hot, impassioned words were ready to his lips.

Beautiful, indeed, was Unnalala, as she stood there in the prow, her slight form bending gracefully to the wind, her black eyes dancing with delight at the excitement of her whim, her white arms clasping the costly robe to her breast, and her rich hair streaming out on the breeze in a bright brown tangle; and every man on board was mad for love of her, and the crew made light of the danger of the storm.

The warships skimmed not so swiftly over the heavy sea as the royal craft, and one by one were distanced in the race for home, till when the line of surf on the harbour bar was reached, one vessel only was in hailing distance.

Volda, the captain of this ship, was a tall, strong-shouldered man with raven locks and dawning beard, a man who had loved the sea and lived upon it from his childhood up; and he had long looked upon the White Queen from judicious distance with affection and desire.

His eyes were fixed upon her supple figure, poised there so recklessly in the path of the flying spray, yet he saw, though her sailors did not, her helm swerve suddenly and the Royal craft lurch sidewise to the sea and strike on a sunken rock. The light vessel heeled over into the white surf that roared upon the bar, and filling rapidly, began to sink.

In an instant Volda sprang from his deck and, swimming forward, plunged into the eddying vortex that the foundering ship was making, and, ere any of her own crew could reach her, caught the White Queen in his arms and struck out for his own ship. Powerful and love-nerved as he was, the suction of the sinking craft was great and dragged them under for a moment, but with a mighty effort he fought through the swirling eddy and out into the freer water. With long, sweeping strokes he pulled towards his ship, and there ready hands threw ropes, and with the White Queen of Atlantis in his arms Volda was hauled to the deck. In that fierce fight with death he had kissed her once—with what seemed to him the mad boldness of a hopeless love—and her pale face had flushed to a rosy red at his caress, though she spoke not; yet she was in no wise angry when they stood in safety, and she thanked him in words that were themselves a recompense for his peril.

"Thou art a brave man, Volda," she said, smiling at him through the salt glisten on her lovely face. "And may ask of me whatsoever boon thou desirest best, and even then I shall be in thy debt."

"'Twas but my duty, Majesty," said the sailor simply, though long-dormant love was consuming his heart and the fragrance of her lips was still upon his. "'twas but my duty, and for thy sweet sake no risk would be too heavy; no sacrifice too great."

"Thou canst flatter as well as my nobles and courtiers, my brave sailor," said the Queen, "and more sincerely, I vow! Nevertheless it is in my mind to render thee some service for the life thou hast preserved to me this day, and I appoint thee the captain of my guard, and the admiral of my coasting fleet. Will that dignity suit thee, or must I name another?"

"Surely whatever thy lips propose will suit me, Majesty," answered the sailor, bending to his knee in adoration the while he feasted his eyes upon her regal face. "Surely the gift is good because it is thy gift. But what will say thy cousin, Prince Mesano, to his duty being given to another—to a fameless sailor, a mere servant?"

"What he says I shall not heed, nor must thou, my captain, though I have doubt whether he has escaped from the wreck."

At this a daring hope seized Volda, and bitterly was he disappointed when he found that the Prince had been rescued by one of the boatmen in the harbour.

Volda caught the White Queen in his arms.

WHAT PARIS THINKS OF WM. RADAM'S MICROBE KILLER.

A PHYSICIAN'S EXPERIENCE.

"SIR,—You ask me for my opinion of the 'Microbe Killer.' I give it all the more willingly as I can only praise it most highly, for, of all the patients who have been to the Radam Institut at No. 19, Boulevard Roissonnière, Paris, there is not one who has not been relieved by the treatment. I will not say that all of them have been cured, but the greater number have been relieved from affections which had hitherto resisted all medical treatment; the rest are still under treatment and in course of recovery.

"The first thing to be learned from these facts is the perfect harmlessness of the preparation. Its efficacy is also unquestionable. In point of fact, amongst the numerous cases of Eczema which I have seen there with my own eyes, not one has resisted; all of them have been radically cured. All cases of simple bronchitis have yielded in three days; all patients suffering from tuberculosis (consumption) in the second degree have increased in weight, regained strength, and, for many of them, their cure is only a question of days; those suffering in the first degree no longer show signs of anything but the most perfect health. The successes of the treatment have got beyond count, *intermittent fevers, cholerine, dysentery,* and *influenza* are rapidly cured.

Bacillus of Whooping Cough.

"Hundreds of proofs of the efficacy of the 'Microbe Killer' could also be found amongst the numerous patients who we have attended gratuitously at the Comtesse de Bouteillier's Clinical Surgery. The few following words taken from the report of the doctor intrusted with the medical direction of that Institution will afford proof thereof. 'At the Clinical Surgery of La Charité, No. 90, Rue des Dames, we have used for six months Radam's liquid called the "Microbe Killer" for various patients suffering from different pathological affections. Upon those suffering from tuberculosis the effect has been a marked general improvement; the appetite has returned, strength has been recovered, and sleep has become more calm. As regards the local condition, which with these patients always changes slowly, it appears that a real action is manifested, the coughing is less frequent, and the expectoration less copious. A case of acute nephritis was set right in the course of a few days, and the same patient, who for a long time past had a somewhat large *goitre,* was able to state that under the influence of the treatment with the "Microbe Killer" this *goitre,* upon which we had no intention of acting, had, nevertheless, disappeared.

"'Our genuine success is accentuated in the case of skin diseases. A case of scurvy in a man thirty years of age, whose whole beard was affected, his face being tumefied with consecutive adenite of the lower maxillary region, was especially striking. The patient was completely freed from it after some weeks' assiduous use of Radam's "Microbe Killer."'

"In view of such successes we are entitled to ask how the remedy acts. Its action is like that of all antiseptics, but it has the immense advantage over the majority of the latter, that it can be taken internally and can saturate the whole system. Its antiseptic power is beyond doubt. Take a few drops of No. 3 'Microbe Killer' and pour them into a test tube in which you have first of all cultivated some microbes. Immediately all vegetation will cease, and in a short time all the ferments will be destroyed. On the other hand, pour a few drops of it into the hand, even on to a mucous part, and you will feel no burning sensation, and no inflammatory effect will be produced on the epidermis, no matter how long you leave the liquid in contact with the tissues.

"It is, therefore, an antiseptic of the highest class, which destroys the ferments and causes no disturbance in the system.

"It is in this respect that it differs from the antiseptics most generally used, which too often only destroy the microbes at the cost of the simultaneous destruction of the living cells.

"Its action in skin diseases, eczema, &c., is explained by what we have just said. In all illnesses caused by bad digestion, and which often manifest themselves by what are called 'impurities of the blood,' the 'Microbe Killer' obviates all abnormal fermentation, and thereby puts in order the digestive functions.

"L. DRUET.

"*Doctor of the Faculté de Paris.*"

Extracts from a letter written by M. EMILE GAUTIER (Chief Scientific Chronicler to *Le Figaro* and *Petit Journal* and Chief Editor of *La Science Française*) in reply to one received from M. H. GIRAUD, Préfet de Police:

"If I chose to reproduce the explanatory and documentary evidence which I possess with reference to the cases which are personally known to me, that is to say, the cases of those who, upon my suggestions or advice, have tried the 'Microbe Killer,' and also the cases of those whom I have had occasion to interview, verbally or in writing, on the same subject, if I chose, I say, to publish the whole of this chapter of my archives, it would fill, to say the least, two or three entire numbers of *La Science Française.* Now the cases which are personally known to me cannot constitute one-tenth of the cases treated and cured. I am speaking, of course, only of France, for if it were necessary to bring to light the statistics of the various civilised countries in which the 'Microbe Killer' has, after a hard fight, ended in winning its citizenship, the documents would assume the gigantic proportions of a pile of Directories."

"This is by no means mere boasting; I have proofs of it, duly certified by a legion of police inspectors, at the disposal of anyone whom it may concern."

"You write me that you tried the 'Microbe Killer,' and that you found yourself all the better for it. It is really curious that all who had tried it before you unanimously say precisely the same thing."

"It is not the consumptives of the poorer classes, in whom the Comtesse de Bouteillier interests herself, who would undertake to say the contrary."

"Neither would it be the celebrated Italian artist, Mr. Dracopoli (of Antibes), who, having suffered for ten years from Chronic Eczema, which had resisted the most learned treatment, and which made his life intolerable, proclaims in twenty enthusiastic letters which I have before me, that he was radically cured in a few months by the constant use of the 'Microbe Killer.'"

"I might endlessly pursue this list, in which would only be included educated people whose names and characters are not reconcilable with the hypothesis of a collective hallucination, and still less with that of fraudulent collusion."

"Moreover, there are already a number of doctors about town who regularly prescribe the 'Microbe Killer,' the evident effects of which, in radically curing certain cutaneous affections and in undeniably improving the condition in desperate cases of tuberculosis and cancer, have ended by stifling all scholastic and professional prejudice."

Kindly send for new book entitled, "Disease: Its Cause and Cure." It will be sent free to any address. This work explains fully just what the remedy will do if used for the various forms of disease.—Wm. Radam's Microbe Killer Co. Ltd., 111, Oxford Street, London, W.

KREAT HALVIVA

The Special Antidote to
INFLUENZA,
LOW FEVER,
and
MALARIA.

KREAT HALVIVA

Immediately relieves
and speedily cures all forms of
INDIGESTION.

KREAT HALVIVA

A PURE
VEGETABLE
TONIC.

Supersedes all others,
especially Quinine,
as no ill effects follow its use,
giving
New Life and Strength
to the most delicate.
A perfect restorative after debilitating disease.

KREAT HALVIVA

Recommended
by the highest medical authorities,
FORTIFIES THE NERVES,
Curing
Neuralgic Pains and Sleeplessness.

KREAT HALVIVA, on sale at all Chemists, **2s. 9d.** a bottle.
Pamphlets of Medical Testimonials free from
HALVIVA COMPANY LTD., 4, TEMPLE CHAMBERS, LONDON.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
"NOVELTIES." JOHN THRIDGOULD & CO.'S "NOVELTIES."

NEW YEAR AND CHRISTMAS CARDS

NOVELTY, BEAUTY, AND EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Characterises each and every one of our packets, and the fact that increased repeat orders invariably follow is a fair criterion of the satisfaction these selections give to our Customers.
SEND AT ONCE, YOU CANNOT DO BETTER.

1s.	No. 1. SANTA CLAUS PACKET of Fifty Christmas and New Year Cards, bright and attractive designs. Every Card different with Seasonable Verses and Greetings. The value here is really wonderful. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	No. 3. CHRISTMAS CHIMES. A Prize Packet of twelve very handsome Folding and Relief Edge Trifold Cards. Better than ever. Embossed and jewelled designs. The majority are well worth 4d. and 6d. each. Many Novelties which alone are worth more than the price charged for the whole parcel. All will be delighted with this selection. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	1s.
1s.	No. 2. THE "FAMILY" PACKET. Twenty-five Goodwill Cards usually sold at 2d. and 3d. each, the majority of which are Folding Cards. A very welcome assortment where quality and quantity is required. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	No. 5. THE "ELITE" PACKET. Six really Beautiful Cards; their artistic merit is simply perfection. Published at 6d. and 9d. each. Elaborate designs after clever artists, with quotations by celebrated authors. A capital selection where only a few good cards are desired. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	1s.

2/6 THE FINE ART HALF-GUINEA BOX.

A superb collection of Best Cards, Twenty-five Rich Designs, most graceful and charming Cards. This Season's Selection is certainly the best we have ever had the pleasure of offering, comprising cards from the value of 2d. to 9d. each; all are elegant Folding and Trifold Cards. Ideal Designs with Filigree, Trellis, and Relief Overlapping Floral Sprays. Some Autograph and most exquisitely Jewelled, with carefully selected verses and quotations from celebrated Authors. As a further inducement to make our Fine Art Box as popular as the rest, we **Present Gratis a Dainty Booklet,** beautifully got up by R. TUCK & SON. Much admired. Sent per Parcels Post paid, 2s. 9d.; or two Boxes, differently assorted, 5s.

1s.	No. 7. MIZPAH MESSAGES. A choice Packet of six most Beautiful Folding Floral Cards, with carefully chosen Religious Verses by Frances Ridley Havergal, also with this packet we present a very pretty Booklet, with Poem. Appropriate for the Season. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	No. 9. WINGED WISHES. Six Charming Booklets. These exquisite little Gems will be very popular souvenirs this season. Most Elaborate Exteriors and Interiors, got up in the most tasteful manner, finished with Silk Cord and Tassels. Worth three times the price we are offering them at. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	1s.
1s.	No. 8. S. S. TEACHER'S PACKET. Contains 36 Choice Cards to the value of Half-a-crown. Messages of Peace Scripture Cards, with seasonable wishes by Ernest Nister. Every card different, and are sure to be appreciated. Splendid value. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	No. 10. COMICAL CARDS. Eighteen most Humorous Designs, Quite New, Shaped and Folding, comprising many good Jokes and Novelties, with appropriate lines. Very funny. Also some capital Pun Cards, usually sold at 2d. and 3d. each, are included. Real Fun without Vulgarity. Sent post paid, 1s. 1d.	1s.

Shopkeepers would find these Packets yield good profit in retailing the cards separately, as the Styles are new. We flatter ourselves we have the pick, and are not to be compared in any way with the rubbish usually put into packets.
THE FANCY TRADE should send for Wholesale Catalogue and Samples of Christmas Cards, Novelties, &c., post free 3 stamps. Cheapest House in London.

JOHN THRIDGOULD & CO.,
18 and 20, SIDNEY STREET, COMMERCIAL ROAD, LONDON, E. *(Established 1851.)*

However, he saw the lovely Queen each day thereafter in his new position, and Unnalala was so gracious to him, and sought his advice so often, and left the fawning sycophants of the court so readily to seek a quiet converse with her bluff and simple sailor, that his hope revived and strengthened, and his love grew greater with every setting of the sun.

The nobles and their followers at first made sport of his clumsy ways with many witty sayings and veiled sneers, but little he cared for that when the Queen smiled upon him and gave him privileges that they would have slain each other for, and after a time his roughness wore off, and he could answer taunt with taunt, and give good interest as well; and when it came to tests of skill in swordsmanship for hot words rashly spoken, Volda more than held his own. He had no equal in the city at single combat, so that in time the bravest and most generous of the soldiers and the most of the common people came to idolise him second only to their loved White Queen. As for the Prince, he bore his slight with a very ill grace, but took care not to risk his reputation as a dauntless soldier by openly coming to a quarrel with his fortunate rival.

But Volda chafed in the silken cords of inactivity, and longed to once more grasp the rudder of his good ship, and feel upon his face the fresh strong breeze of the western sea. And yet he could not tear himself from Unnalala's presence. He saw but one thing he could do—declare his love and so regain his freedom, one way or the other—and that was a deed so daring that he trembled at the thought of it, and often choked back the words that would have burst unbidden from his lips.

At last the strong current of his love broke down the barriers of self-control, and one calm even, as they walked together in the garden of her private palace on the outskirts of the city—the self-same garden where, in long after years, Queen Briseis found her Arnon sleeping and straightway fell in love with him—Volda poured out the passion that consumed him in a wild torrent of beseeching words, and begged her to take pity on his plight. And having spoken, he threw himself at her feet, half confident and half afraid, and awaited her answer.

Unnalala had listened to his pleading with a shy sweet smile, and her cheeks, which at first had chilled to white, flushed to the red of pleasure ere he had finished; for she knew that dearer to her than the crown she wore was the love of this man. Yet when she must reply a shadow of pain came over her face.

"'Tis hard to deny thee anything, my Volda," she said, placing her fluttering hand on his throbbing brow, "and deny thee my love I cannot, if I would, for since thou kissed me in the stormy sea it hath been thine. But there is a bar to the fulfilment of thy desire that I am afraid nor thou nor I can break—in honour. Hast thou not heard of the ancient law which ordains that a queen must marry amongst her royal kinsfolk only?"

Now it must be told that this law was an old one, the origin of which no man knew, but the observance of which the priests kept up with great strictness; and it enacted that whoso dared to break the injunction should forfeit the throne and her lover should suffer the common death. And that this evil law might be preserved, the long-forgotten maker of it had decreed that neither the authority of the priests nor the statutes of rulers should avail to alter it, but if at any time a queen should choose to sacrifice her life to the sea, it should be rendered null and void. So with the joy that nothing could repress, there was an undertone of sorrow in the White Queen's gentle voice.

Volda leapt to his feet at her admission, painfully spoken as it was, and scarcely heeded what she said besides.

"I have heard of the law," he said between the kisses that he pressed upon her willing lips, "but only vaguely, in my idle moments at the drinking-houses of the sea-shore towns. Surely, Unnalala, sweet, thou canst over-ride an antique law?"

The Queen shook her head gravely.

"I fear our task will be a vain one, Volda," answered Unnalala, "my mind misgives me of the future, and I would that I had gone down in the storm and was lying under the sea out yonder. Yet go to the priest and ask his counsel—say that I bid him question the oracle for me—and to-morrow we will talk again. And so, sweetheart, good-night—for if this that we wish may not be, no other sweetheart will I have!

"It will not be so easy, Volda." And she told him of its cruel nature and the tenacity with which the priests upheld it, and went on: "So thou seest, dear one, that unless I break the law for ever, we cannot be more to each other than queen and servant; whilst if I break it, thou wouldst lose me altogether, Volda."

"Which the Spirits forbid!" cried he, his exultation sobering. "I could not lose thee now, my queen. I will consult Septah, the Priest of Truth, and thou shalt try thy royal power to the utmost, and we shall yet avoid these dread alternatives."

The troubled sailor kissed her tenderly, speaking words of comfort and of hope that his heart echoed not, and stood there by the splashing fountain, watching her departure down the blossom-bordered walk until the last flutter of her white robe vanished into the swaying shadows of the lentisk trees; and it seemed to him that there was no music in the tinkle of the many rills, no peace in the silent falling of the balmy night, no pleasure in the songs of the birds.

Full of anxious thought, and cursing bitterly the unknown maker of the evil law, Volda at last bestirred himself to be going. He had taken two steps forward when his quick eyes noticed a moving amongst the foliage beyond a bed of flowers, and a man strode out into the open space and barred his way.

The two men recognised each other on the instant, and, jealousy maddening the one and despair the other, their words of greeting were few and curt. Said the Prince:

"So, insolent, I have caught thee in the act of treason! So, Sir Sailor, thou wouldst have my wayward cousin break the law that may not be broken!"

"And so, eavesdropper, thou art angry at my better fortune!" sneered Volda. "So, coward, I have thee at my sword's point, and thou canst not refuse the challenge!" and his blade sprang from its sheath and shone threateningly in the twilight. "Why camest not out of thy listening place before?"

His blows so fast and furious.

"Because I waited for thy hot passion to cool!" said Mesano, likewise on his guard, "for a man never fights so well as when fresh from the kisses of his love."

"'Tis a pity thou wast so cunningly cautious," replied Volda bitterly, "for now I may be longer over the killing of thee than I should have been—and killing is an experience one does not wish prolonged. So guard thyself!"

Stung to fury by the taunt, Mesano lost all control, and the two men closed with slash, and thrust, and parry, and feint, and with white faces and set lips and straining eyes fought each other in the failing light. Both were good swordsmen, and both were resolute, and both blades were of sound metal, that rang and bent as they met, and for a time the issue hung in the balance.

Then the hardier training and more determined will of Volda gave him the advantage, and slowly he pressed his adversary back towards the trees, piercing his defence at every second stroke. Still, the Prince held out, made desperate by sheer despair, and rained his blows so fast and furious that the sailor could not get home his final cut in the uncertain glimmer of the clouded moon.

At length, just as they reached the edge of the open space, the moon sailed into a clear patch of sky, and shone full on the panting men. Volda saw his chance, and provoked his foe to a rash lunge; their swords met, and spark-sprays sprang from the crossing edges. Mesano's blade went spinning in the air, and the next moment, with a lightning stroke, Volda's steel cut his assailant's neck. With a half-stifled cry the Prince lurched forward, groping blindly with his hands, then fell down, dead.

With a bitter smile at his ill-luck in having slain the Queen's cousin, Volda wiped his sword on the grass, and went straightway to the Temple of the Spirit of Life, and told the deed to the priests, awaiting the coming of the morrow with a fear that would not let him sleep.

The punishment for slaying one of the blood-royal was death in a horrible form, and the priests held out no hope of reprieve. The great nobles, who were jealous of his position, came and mocked at him when the news spread about the city in the morning, and Volda sat in moody silence until the soldiers came to lead him to the palace to be tried and sentenced for the crime his fiery anger had led him to commit.

There, in state, lay the body of the dead Prince, the Queen's cousin, resting on a black-draped bier to the left of the Golden Throne, and behind, his accusing kindred, a sternly mournful line. The curious crowd made an avenue through which the prisoner and his escort walked, and few were the faces that looked on him with pity. Some of the common people and the gentler court ladies; that was all.

The captain of the guard felt that his case was evil indeed as he passed through the murmuring throng and came to the foot of the throne in that sombre chamber. Yet his chief care was for what Unnalala would think; whether her love for him was shaken by the shock.

Presently the swaying curtain of the further doorway lifted, and Neylein, Priest of Life, came forth and halted, holding the tapestry sidewise. The eyes of all were turned to that portal, and in the hush that followed, a black slave cried:

"The Queen!"

Pale, yet with firm step and tearless eyes, as one who has thought deeply and made a great resolve, Unnalala advanced to the throne, bestowing on the throng a smile of greeting that through its sweetness had a shadow of woe, and then motioned to the ministers of state to bring out the rolls of the law.

Volda heard the indictment as one in a dream. His weary-lidded eyes saw only the Queen distinctly in the maze of the many faces; he listened only with interest to the sound of her voice, and when asked what defence he had to make, said simply that he had slain the Prince in fair quarrel, and would divulge no more. Then the solemn questioning ceased, and the Priest of Life gave his judgment, and it was time for the Queen to speak.

With flashing eyes and burning cheeks the White Queen rose, and in the silence which fell, declared that the death sentence must be set aside and the prisoner go free. At this a murmur of surprise went up from the crowd, and loud and angry discussion arose, for some were with Volda now and some against him. But the ushers cried "Peace!" and Septah, Priest of Truth, raised his right hand to command attention.

"Thy goodness and thy mercy, Queen, are well known to us," he said, "but there are times when mercy is mistaken; when forgiveness is impolitic and impossible. Over all laws save those relating to royalty thou hast control, but those thou must obey by the authority of the Spirits, whose power is above that of kings. By this law the captain of the guard must die, and thou canst not withhold the doom."

Unnalala heard him calmly to the end, then sprang a step forward and took Volda by the hand and led him to the side of the throne and said:

"I tell thee, priest, the captain of my guard shall *not* die! I tell thee, priest, and I tell you, my beloved people, that I can withhold the unjust doom. For he slew my coward cousin in my quarrel, 'tis evident, though he has not told you so, and is it worthy of a queen who has pardoned the lowest wretches to let a brave man suffer a cruel death for a rash deed done for her sake?"

The audience chamber rang with a burst of wild acclaim in answer, but amid the tumult Septah rose again and cried:

"I question not thy inclination, Queen, nor the goodness of it; but this law is sanctioned of the Spirits, and none can escape from its stern decree."

"Thinkest thou so, my learned priest?" said Unnalala, a flame of colour sweeping across her face, "thinkest thou so? Then I will put thy wisdom to the test and prove it wanting. There is another and an equal law: that if a queen marry a man who is not of the blood-royal he shall die the common death. And this man—even Volda, the captain of my guard, whose right hand I clasp to my

THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES.

THE MERITS of these Costumes as proclaimed by the actual wearers (and their name is legion) constitute the best advertisement the John Noble Half-Guinea Costumes could possibly have.

ONE OUTSTANDING MERIT they possess is the fact that, owing to their supremacy of Material, Cut, Style, and Finish, **THEY ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE** from West-end Creations at three and even four guineas each, and bear not the stamp of the slop-made garments so unpleasantly familiar; and, what is of great importance, the Variety and frequent production of new styles in the John Noble Half-Guinea costumes precludes any possibility of stereotyped uniformity. They are supplied direct from JOHN NOBLE LTD., THE LARGEST FIRM OF COSTUMIERS IN EXISTENCE, and

NOBLE'S SKETCH BOOK how these Half-Guinea and such a marvellous state of also for **PATTERNS POST**

OF NEW FASHIONS explains fully other Costumes have been brought to perfection. Write and ask for same. **OF THE MATERIALS FREE.**

TWO GOLD MEDALS AWARDED

THE STAR OF SUCCESS

MODEL Continues with increasing lustre on 431 as a popular and most serviceable Costume for Girls. It is made in the Cheviot Serge, John Noble with saddle-top, loose lunging skirt, full sleeves, and deep cuffs, and is effectively trimmed as sketch with gold silk braid.

Lengths: 19 21 24 27 30 33 in.
Prices: 2/3 2/9 3/4 4/- 4/9 5/6 ea.
Lengths: 36 39 42 45 in.
Prices: 6/3 7/- 7/9 8/9 each.
Carriage 6d. extra. Lengths are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt front.

THE SHIELD OF HONOR

In the return for Young Ladies' Costumes has been awarded this Season to Model 587.

AN EMBROIDERED DESIGN.

Model 587.

In the John Noble Serge Bodice the Vest of Serge in contrasting colour is made in fold effect, embroidered and the sleeves trimmed. Skirt amply full. Carriage 6d. from top of bottom of skirt

John Cheviot Bodice has Vest of Serge in colour, embroidered cord, and each side with tons. Newest med to match. wide. extra. Lengths neckband to in front.

Lengths 35 38 42 46 50 in.
Prices 11/9 12/9 14/- 15/6 17/- each.
Carriage 6d. extra.

ABSOLUTELY THE BEST VALUE IN THE WORLD.

MODEL 582 is a new light-fitting design in the **JOHN NOBLE Half-Guinea Costumes** made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge. The FRONT PIECING, Bonnet figure, is scientifically shaped to the being daintily trimmed with well cut prettily designed revers, outlined black soutache braid. Saddle and sleeves lined. The back, and skirt fully. Price only **10/6** complete, safely packed for 9d. extra. **SKIRT** permit of easy alteration to fit the figure. **ONLY**, as sketch, 5/6, carriage 6d. extra.

10/6

MODEL 586. THE JOHN NOBLE VELVET-TRIMMED COSTUME, made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge. The FRONT-PIECING BODICE of this smart design is trimmed front with a V-shaped plastron of graduated velvet, over a boxpleat finished with handsome buttons. Cuffs and collar to match. Saddle and sleeves lined. The large "turnings" left in the seams under arms permit of easy alteration to fit the figure perfectly. THIS SKIRT, owing to its abundant width, hangs in graceful folds. Price only **13/9** for the complete costume of bodice and skirt, safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

13/9

MODEL 583. NOBLE'S LATEST CREATION IN HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES is certain to secure high favour. Carried out in the Cheviot Serge, the BODICE of this charming design is a smart well-cut style with the fronts shaped to the figure and the front pleated at the waist. A Novel Yoke Collar extends over the shoulders, and terminates in two points at back and front, where it is secured to the bodice with ornamental buttons. Saddle and sleeves lined. Skirt full wide. Price only **10/6**

10/6

MODEL 468. THE JOHN NOBLE POPULAR SUIT is a charming design carried out in the John Noble Cheviot Serge. The Tailor-made Open Coat has the new sleeves, two pockets, and turned down roll collar complete, and is lined into smart curved revers. The basque is arranged in very smart folds, and the seams of the sleeves and back are tailor-stitched à la mode. Price complete 15/-, safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

15/-

LADIES' FASHIONABLE DRESS BODICES to wear with these costumes are supplied separately in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, price only 5/6 each, carriage 6d. extra.

THE JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE

in which these Costumes are made, is a fabric of world wide fame and durability, and being extra double width (52in.) cuts to the best advantage in making garments. The colours are

7/6

perfectly fast and do not spot with rain. The price for the FULL DRESS LENGTH of 6 YARDS being only 7/6, carriage 9d. extra, or any length may be had at 1/3 the yard.

JOHN NOBLE LTD. ARE THE LARGEST FIRM OF COSTUMIERS IN THE WORLD.

WINTER DRESS FABRICS

Fascinating weaves, charming colourings, hundreds of artistic new designs for Winter in Silk, Wool and Cotton. OVER 1,000 PATTERNS are contained in Noble's Large Box, sent Post Free on approval to any address. Prices from 4½d. to 4/6 the yard. A post-card insures receipt of the Box by return.

THE SEAL OF PUBLIC OPINION has stamped the business of John Noble Ltd. with highest praise.

John Noble's customers include Ladies of Fashion, well known in London Society for taste and judgment.

GOOD LUCK

MODEL 425. MAIDS' COSTUME

In the John Noble Cheviot Serge Bodice is made with prettily gathered front and shaped belt SKIRT is trimmed with four rows of narrow black Braid, the Russia cuffs, collar of bodice and belt being trimmed similarly.

Carriage extra. paid 6d. are from neck-bottom Lengths top of band to in of skirt front.

FROM **6/11**

The Season's Greetings From John Noble Ltd.

Lengths and Prices.
33 36 41 46 50 in.
6/11 7/9 8/9 9/9 10/9 ea.
Carriage paid 9d. extra.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

which are useful are always more acceptable than articles made only to look at, and what can be more acceptable, useful, and ornamental, and a more seasonable gift to a lady or child than one of

JOHN NOBLE'S SERGE COSTUMES?

Ladies Own Designs Specially Estimated for.

Please mention **PEARSON'S WEEKLY** when ordering.

THE JOHN NOBLE KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS are supplied in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, with saddle top, long full sleeves, belt, and pocket. Being loose fitting, they allow ample room for development of the limbs, and always look neat and becoming despite the roughest usage. Note the following low prices: FROM

Lengths: 21 24 27 30 33 36 39 42 45 in. Sent carriage
Prices: 1/6 2/- 2/6 3/- 3/6 4/- 4/6 5/- 5/6 ea. paid 6d. extra

EVERY PURCHASER DELIGHTED. **1/6** EACH

The lengths stated are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

THE STOCK SIZES of the Ladies' Costumes advertised above are 34, 36, and 38 in. round the bust under arms, the skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. For 1/6 extra, however, a costume MADE TO MEASURE can be supplied, and a Perfect Fit guaranteed. Self measurement Form post free on application. SPECIAL ESTIMATES submitted for LADIES' OWN DESIGNS in any material.

COLOURS. Any of the above Costumes can be supplied in Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze Green, Electric Blue, Petunia, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.

PATTERNS of the material, also Noble's Sketch Book of Up-to-Date Fashions for Ladies' and Children sent post free on application. Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London and Midland Bank," and made payable to

JOHN NOBLE LTD., BROOK STREET MILLS, MANCHESTER.

The Copyright of this Advertisement is Protected.

breast, and whose lips I kiss, thus, in token of our betrothal—is my lover, and him will I wed, in spite of thy law!"

At these words a great silence fell upon the throng, and Volda, looking into the eyes of the Queen, read there something, which, from the very intensity of the love for him it showed, smote him with self-reproach as with a keen-edged sword. Then Septah found tongue again, and his speech came measured and slow.

"In that way, Majesty, 'tis true thou canst spare him the worst death, but thou wilt also lose thy royal dignity, and the dynasty of Dulo will be cut short in its beginning. And thy lover will die in the end after all, unless thou wilt dare the dread alternative, and, by giving thy life for his, render the law void for ever."

"And that alternative I dare!" cried the Queen, checking Volda's desire to stay her speech. "The Captain of my Guard, my loved, my betrothed—now soon to be my lord and king—shall not die, either by the painless or the agony death, even though I give my life and throne to save him, and every dynasty in Atlantis be broken in the act."

And having spoken, Unnalala, looking radiantly lovely in the abandon of her resolve, turned to the ministers and bade them enter her words in the records of state. But before they could comply or remonstrate with her, or the awe-stricken courtiers could vent their astonishment or rage, Volda shook off the clinging clasp of her hands and cried:

"I could not hold my life at such a cost! I have been foolish and presumptuous, and 'tis I who should suffer. Let me die as the priest says, and remember me not save as a rash sailor whose fault was loving thee too well."

With a swift movement Unnalala stepped from the throne, and commanding him to cease, clasped him by the hand again and said, in tones that rang sweet and clear through that gilded chamber:

"What I have said I have said. What I have resolved I will do. Thy love is dear to me, Volda, dearer than life or title, and also, it is time this evil decree was broken for good and all. I have pondered often and long regarding it, and the spur of my own passion has quickened my judgment. I have thought of the many who will come after me who may, perchance, be in like plight, and it hath come into my mind that on me hath fallen the duty of saving them from the shadow that darkens this hour."

Volda would have spoken again, and the priests and nobles were loud in their protestations and pleadings to the Queen to consider and repent of her decision, but to all she turned a deaf ear; and she was so regally determined in her firmness that the people who pressed against the lines of spearmen were moved to roars of loud appraise with which was intermingled the sound of strong men sobbing, and the wailing cry of women's grief.

Neylein was desirous of seeing the law take its course without delay, but Unnalala had a woman's wit, and declared that the fifty days of betrothal must pass, and they must be married before the sentence could be fulfilled.

"And," she said, with a smile lighting her wan face for an instant, like a sudden ray of light through the breaking clouds of a stormy day, "it is not written in what manner I surrender my life to the sea, and surely that is a fitting reason for due pause and careful consideration of the Sacred Oracle of Thinae?"

Now, the priests were wise in their day and generation, and the temper of the people was evident, so the word of the Queen ruled and the trial immediately ended.

They forthwith carried out the body of the dead Prince to the house of mourning. And those of the openly discontented who thought themselves shrewd, made needless haste from the city, some even betaking themselves to ship and sailing for the colonies.

Unnalala took Volda by the hand.

When all had gone from the chamber save they two, Unnalala turned to the inner door that led to her own apartments, and finding that he followed her not, paused on the threshhold, hesitated, and then came back.

"Why loiter here? Why not come with me, dear heart? Surely thou wilt miss my face before the fifty days of waiting are past and gone?—for that cruel custom must be observed. Why look at me so strangely?"

"I was thinking how best and quickest I could end this misery," said he. "What I purpose doing must be done speedily and well, so that no weakness holds me back."

In a moment her arms were about his neck, and her soft cheek against his.

"It is for love of thee, Volda," she cried. "It is for love of thee that I do this, as well as for the sake of those who may come after me. Nay, turn not away, sweet, I could not live without thee, and if thou dost thyself any harm in the fifty days, I swear by the Three Spirits that I will still do what I have said! But promise, love, that thou wilt not—promise me!"

Even then he hesitated, knitting his brows blackly. Once more she bent her face to his, and this time she whispered in his ear. He started, a light shone in his eyes like that which fires the weary gaze of a shipwrecked mariner who descries a nearing sail at last, and the frown on his forehead vanished.

He drew her to him closer, and looked into her eyes as one who leaves his love behind for a long journey, and then she turned to her own apartment and was gone. And with the kisses of the Queen still warm upon his lips, the Captain of the Guard strode out into the busy city and down to the waterside, and bade the sailors get ready the swiftest vessel in the fleet.

It was the custom in Atlantis that lovers, for fifty days before marriage, should neither see nor have speech with each other, and lest he should transgress or interfere with her plans, Volda resolved to spend his waiting on the sea. It was past noon when he gave his command to prepare for the voyage, and as the even shadows fell and the early stars peeped out from the clear heaven, his ship put off with a favouring breeze and sped away into the night.

After the time of mourning for the Prince was over, the Queen herself went with great ceremony to Thinae; and taking rich presents to Onthis, the Priest of the oracle which was there in those days, sought his advice as to the way in which she should commit her life to the sea.

The servant of the gods smiled grimly at her request, and sat in thought awhile before he spoke.

"Thou hast a true woman's wit, Queen," he said gravely. "And thou art very generous to the servant of the Spirits! I will not answer thee now, but it may well be that with prayer and fasting a message of helpful import may be vouchsafed thee before the end of the fifty days. So go in peace, Unnalala, and possess thy soul in patience till the bearer of tidings comes from me."

With this promise the Queen had perforce to be content, and with her retinue returned to Kronos by way of the valley of Aidè and past the maritime town of Miropis; and very dull was the court and very half-hearted the merriment that the jesters made, and very mournful the people as they counted the days that slipped so swiftly by. As for Unnalala, the strength of her resolution and the words of Onthis upheld her spirit, but when the fortieth day came and there was no sign of the message and no sign of Volda's return, she grew pale and anxious, and if her eyes shone with a brighter light, they shone in a wan face that caused the people grief to look upon.

And so the time passed and the fiftieth morning dawned bright and calm, and clear over land and sea. The sun soared majestically into the blue, and poured his gracious radiance down upon the temples and palaces, and columns of the stately City; upon the gardens where the fountains played, and the birds sang, and the rills purled softly and the palm trees swayed in the pleasant breeze; upon the harbour, where the ships rode at anchor and the emerald wavelets broke in silver spray upon the bar; upon the press of people waiting anxiously without the palace gates, and upon the waiting Queen, who sat at the casement of her own apartment, her face as white as the snow that glistens on the crags of Anda.

Out upon the sea a ship was speeding homeward, a man with hands shading his haggard eyes standing in the prow. From out of the glittering expanse he saw a dark line rise and broaden as the flying craft drew nearer, and then from that line uprose low hills. At the foot of these the sunlight was reflected from the towers and façades of marble buildings glaring white, and Volda uttered cry of relief, and the crew broke into a subdued cheer as they tacked about and ran for the harbour of Kronos.

Far and recklessly had Volda sailed, seeking death in every shape by storm and battle, in spite of the words the Queen had whispered in his ear; but death comes not to those who seek it, and through the stress of the fiercest gale or the heat of the hottest fight with pirates or foreigners, he bore a charmed life. Once he thought of setting his prow for distant Ulmeca and sailing by the sunny western isles to that far colony; but the memory of her sweet face haunted him too well, and he could not keep away, even if he must go back only to die with her.

As the ship entered the narrowing channel of the bay, the watchers on the quay passed on the news that Volda had returned, and the people pressed in thousands to meet him when he landed and conducted him in sober welcome to the palace. With a wild, rash resolve to pit his popularity against the age-old law, the Captain of the Guard ascended the marble steps, scarcely heeding, in his abstraction, an old man with bent back and skin wrinkled like time-worn parchment, who strove at the same time to push his way in at the brazen portal.

A gorgeously-attired sentry thrust his silver-inlaid spear across the old man's path, and scoffingly demanded his business there.

"By the bones of King Atripan the Unlucky!" he laughed to the crowd, "thou art the grimmest-looking scarecrow who ever sought to put foot on polished marble!"

The scarecrow's eyes flashed at the insult, but he only answered that he had important business, and quietly pushed the spear aside.

"Not so fast, old curmudgeon!" cried the sleek servitor; "not so fast! There will be plenty in the palace to-day without such as thee. Or perhaps thou thinkest to win the Queen's heart!" And, flourishing his sword before the old man's face, he roared again at his own wit.

The wrinkled fellow grew passionately angry and drew his dagger, and blood would have been shed had not Volda overheard the brief colloquy and here interposed his protection.

"Let the old man in," he said sternly. "He doubtless has some petition to make, and to-day, of all days, none can be denied. And to-day, of all days, fellow, is the most ill-fitting for thy clumsy mirth."

The sentry quailed before his look, and the two passed in. Volda thought no more of his antique companion, but that worthy was close at his heels when he reached the great hall where the priests and ministers waited the beginning of the already delayed marriage service. Unnalala had heard of her lover's coming, and now joined him, saying little, though her tear-stained eyes and pale cheeks told much, and they left the palace by the secret door, and in her gilded chariot were whirled along the quiet streets to the Temple of the Three Spirits, where the initial ceremony was performed.

The questions and the answers and the invocations were repeated according to the custom in Atlantis from time immemorial, but sad were the hearts which should have been happy, and silent the concourse that should have been joyously glad. The incense fell on the fire that leapt in the swinging censer-cup, the chorus of the unseen singers pealed their mystic melody through the pillared room, the two who that day became as one made the vow required to the Spirits of Love and Light and Truth; yet as they stepped into the royal cariole that bore them swiftly back to the palace, their faces were only a shade the paler, their hearts a little more sad.

In the audience chamber of her palace, the priestly rite was confirmed, and the Steward of the Royal Household led Unnalala to the throne again, and an attendant

brought Volda to her feet, and the Queen placed the ruby-centred crown upon her head, and he became her lord and king. Even with the shadow of the future darkening their hearts the two clasped hands and kissed as wife and husband, and at the sight the people forgot the shadow for the moment and cheered until the ringing of their voices startled the silver doves in the outer courts.

A sentry scoffingly demanded his business there.

Then Septah stood forth and coldly declared the law once more, and ending said:

"So this day, unless the Queen will give her life to the sea, she ceases to be Queen, and this man to be king, and he shall pay the penalty of his presumption by the common death. It is for the Queen to declare her will."

There was a stir amongst the people, an ominous murmur of displeasure at the stern, cold words of doom, and then the White Queen arose in her place at Volda's side and calmly said:

"I have already declared my will, and nothing can turn me from my purpose. My life I freely give that my King may remain the King and the cruel law be broken and this terror uplifted from the future days. But this I say, also, that not until a year has gone will I submit to the doom."

A great sigh of relief went up from the throng at this addition, yet the anger came back to many faces when Septah, breaking off his converse with the withered old man who had followed Volda, spoke again.

"Not a year hence, but to-day, must the law be fulfilled, Queen Unnalala, for the messenger of Onthis, the priest of the oracle, is here, and he saith that what is written must be done."

"Yea, even to the letter, what is written must be done," re-echoed the bearer of the tidings in a voice strangely sonorous for one so seeming old.

There was an instant's pause and then up rose a sounding roar of anger from the crowd, and voices cried from different places:

"Death to the priestly tyrants! Down with the evil law! The White Queen and her King for ever!"

And the angry concourse pressed forward as one man—a human sea lashed into fury—and assuredly the two priests and their friends would have been torn to pieces before its madness had not Unnalala rushed before them and commanded peace.

"Be calm, my loyal people, and respect the servants of the gods. That what is written shall be done, is my wish also, and surely—yet—my wish is law. Let the messenger of Onthis speak."

The scarecrow straightened his bent back and shook out the wrinkles of his face as though by magic, and all men saw that it was Onthis himself, who had come in disguise.

"Yea, what is written shall be done," said he, speaking as one having authority; "but what is written only, nothing more. And thus speaketh the Oracle through me: *The Queen shall be bound to a white horse, and the steed shall be taken out to the bar at low water and there set free*; and the penalty of death shall fall upon any who put forth hand to touch her with intent to save. This shall be done, and thus shall her life be committed to the sea, *as the law decrees*; but if, *through any misadventure*, the sea takes not her life, the law shall yet be considered broken, and she and her lover shall come to the throne. I have spoken."

Against this fiat the priests of the city were powerless, and they wisely held their peace or hastened to assent; but so angry were the people at the words of Onthis—deeming his message one of despair—that Unnalala had once more to interpose her royal protection between him and her loving subjects' wrath.

Then the throng passed out and surged towards the sea, and presently, pacing slowly down to the harbourside, came the Queen and Volda, hand in hand, with Onthis following respectfully behind, and behind him a prancing milk-white steed was led by two slaves.

They brought the horse to the gangway of the ship that was to take them to the bar, and there the Queen threw off her purple robe, and gave her crown into the keeping of Septah, and was ready to be bound. But first she took Volda's drawn face in her hands and kissed him on the lips, and looking into his eyes, said:

"It is a terrible risk, my love, and I think, now I come to meet it, that but for thee I should shrink back and let the statute hold good. Yet I go to save *thy* life, which my own would be worthless without, and I pray thee, dear, if the sea should cast me up a corpse, to rule my people well, and make Atlantis even greater than I leave her. . . . And so, beloved, farewell."

And she kissed him again, and he held her fast and was loth to let her go, her sweet face seeming sweeter to him then than it had ever done before.

When they bound her, sitting upon the steed, her eyes were dry and bright, and when the ship put off she smiled back upon him as long as their gaze met, though she saw not, from the increasing distance, that the brave sailor broke down and wept like a child. Then he shook off the emotion and sprang towards the nearest ship with intent to save his love in spite of all, in spite of her own desire.

But Onthis put a hand upon his shoulder and sternly bade him stay. Then in an undertone that none else heard, he said:

"Be not rash, friend King. Thou shalt save her yet if thou wilt take heed of my commands. The tide is not yet on the turn, and the bar is almost bare, and every horse can swim, so there is no need for haste. Moreover, under the saddle and round his middle is a band of corks, joined deftly together. Thou must go out when the tide begins to flow, and spring into the surf and seize the steed's bridle and bring him as best thou can to shore, and then all will be well."

"But didst not say that it was death to put forth hand to save?" asked Volda bewildered.

"So thought most," replied the priest, smiling innocently, "but most thought wrong. I said: *And the penalty of death shall fall upon any who put forth hand to touch her with intent to save.* Thou must lead her horse to shore, but thou must not touch her until his hoofs ring on dry land!"

"Thou art my friend, Onthis!" cried the King, "and from to-day thou shalt stand first in the land—my trusted minister—so long as I rule."

"Hadst thou not been worthy of the Queen, or the Queen of Atlantis, my wit would have been at fault," said the priest gravely, "but the Queen is the best of queens as well as the fairest of women, and most generous to the servants of the gods; and that thou art worthy of her I discovered when I purposely sought entrance to the palace in disguise, and the sentry would have turned me back. But see, the tide is lapping higher on the smooth stones; the time is come. Yet remember that to touch her with intent to save means death, and that what is written must be done!"

Little urging needed the King to get aboard the fleetest craft in the bay, and little urging needed the crew to bend to their work as the vessel swept down the bay towards the line of white upon the distant bar. The other ship, returning, passed them swiftly, and soon the straining eyes discerned a break in the foam, and there was the White Queen upon her milk-white steed. He was clear of the curling billows now, and the gallant steed was swimming bravely, though aimlessly, as not sure of his direction, so without a word, without hesitation, Volda plunged into the sea and seized the guiding bit and led him towards the shore.

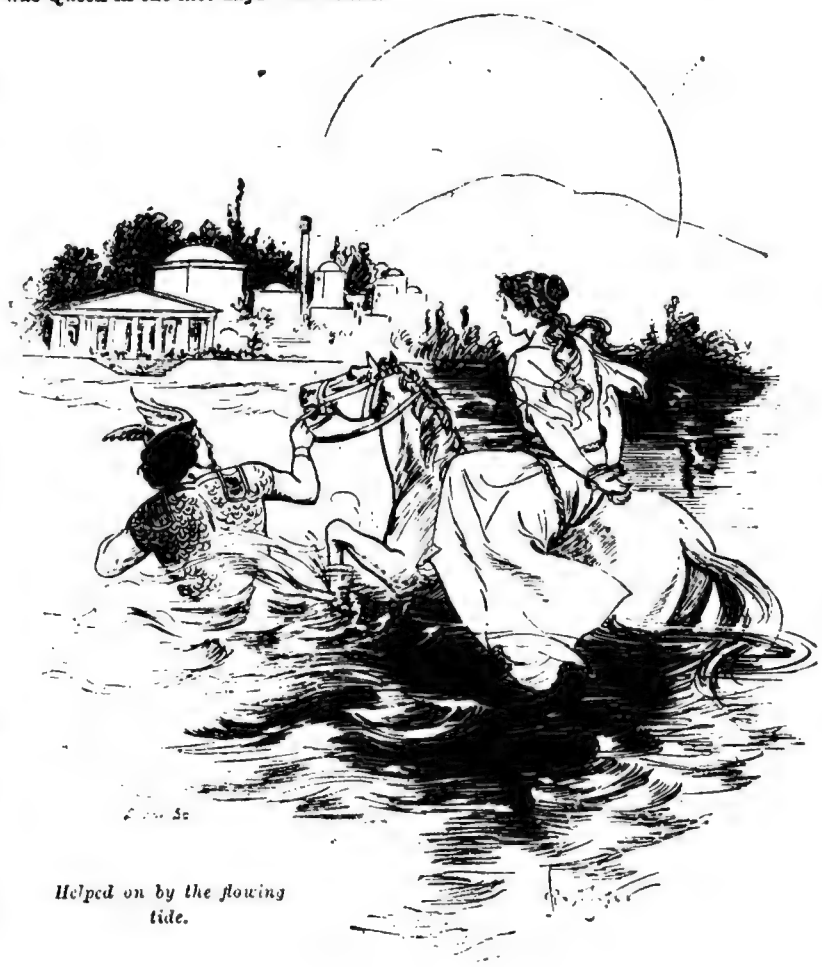
Joy leapt into Unnalala's eyes at the sight of him, and the tears so long restrained now streamed adown her flushed cheeks, but she made no effort to stretch forth her hand. Through the roaring of the surf behind, however, he heard her voice cheering the good horse on, and anon calling *his* name, and there was a satisfied delight in his heart at each hard stroke that brought the low shore nearer.

Thus, through the heaving sea, helped on by the flowing tide, they reached the steps of the harbour, and the spent steed, with a last effort, sprang up them in safety. His nostrils quivered a moment, and he shook, then fell, and the Queen would have been dashed to the stones had not the King caught her in his arms in time. He held her while the willing slaves cut loose the binding thongs, and then they put the purple robe around her again, and Septah placed the crown upon her head, and a swift chariot bore them back to the palace amid the plaudits of the crowd.

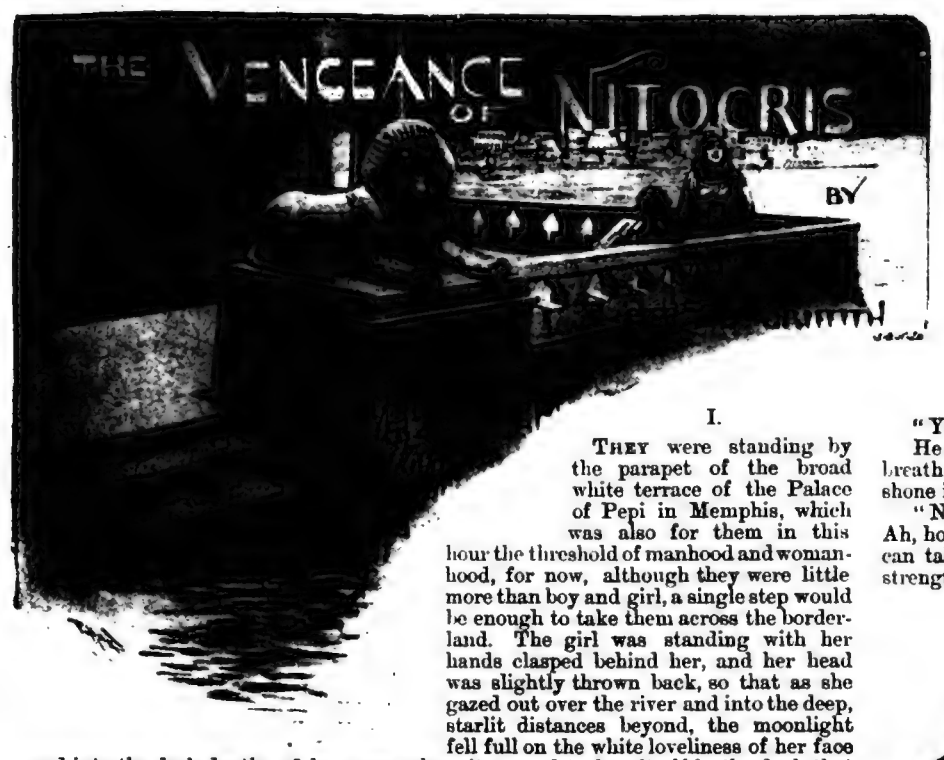
"It seemeth that I was born to save thee from the sea, dear one," said Volda, as the car rolled rapidly through the cheering avenues of people. "It seemeth that I was born for thee and for this day."

"And also that I was born for thee, my lord and king," said Unnalala. "And surely the spirits have been good to me in that."

Thus the White Queen committed her life to the sea and the evil law was broken for ever, and was speedily forgotten. And the King and Queen ruled long and wisely, and when they passed into the Land of Shadows, their son, Dulo the Third, who was grown to manhood's age and stature, sat upon the golden throne in their stead. Thus the line of Dulo was preserved, and of that dynasty was Briseis, who was Queen in the last days of Atlantis.



Helped on by the flowing tide.



I.

THEY were standing by the parapet of the broad white terrace of the Palace of Pepi in Memphis, which was also for them in this hour the threshold of manhood and womanhood, for now, although they were little more than boy and girl, a single step would be enough to take them across the borderland. The girl was standing with her hands clasped behind her, and her head was slightly thrown back, so that as she gazed out over the river and into the deep, starlit distances beyond, the moonlight fell full on the white loveliness of her face and into the dark depths of her eyes, where it seemed to lose itself in the dusk that lay deep down in them, a dusk like the shadow of a soul in sorrow. But the boy looked only upon her face, and saw there a beauty and a mystery fairer and deeper even than the beauty and the mystery of the Egyptian night, for the face of a fair woman is a riddle of the Gods which men may go mad in seeking to read aright and yet never learn the true meaning.

The silence between them had been long, and yet so solemn in its wordless meaning that the boy had neither dared nor desired to break it. Then at length the girl spoke, yet moving only her lips, her body still motionless and her eyes still gazing at the stars or into the depths behind them.

"Can it be true, Meta? Can the Gods indeed have permitted such a thing to be? Can Ptah, the All-Father, have given his chief minister to be the instrument of such a vile crime and monstrous impiety as this?"

"It is as true as the truth of Osiris, Nitocris; as true as that thou art Queen in the land, and, as I have shown thee, I know it as surely as does the shade of Nefer, now waiting in the Halls of Amenthes for the hand of a just vengeance to send his murderers into the presence of the Divine Assessors."

"Ah, yes, vengeance! That must come: but by whose hand? We are not as the Gods, though we may claim kinship with them, and what mortal hand could so arm itself with strength and terror as to duly requite a crime like this?"

"'*A woman's hand is soft and a woman's lips are sweet, yet what so cruel or so stern in all the world!*

"'*As there is nothing liker Heaven than a woman's love, so there is nothing liker Hell than a woman's hate.*'

"So saith the Ancient Wisdom, O Nitocris, and, as thou hast loved Nefer, so shalt thou not also hate Menkau-ra and Anemenha, his murderers and the destroyers of thy promised happiness?"

She shivered a little as he spoke, not with cold, for the breath of the perfect night was well nigh as soft and warm as her own, and then she turned swiftly, and laid her hands on his shoulders.

"You love me, you too, Meta, do you not?"

"Have pity! Alas! how dare I, base-born as I am?"

"Do you love me, Meta? Does your blood glow at my touch? Does your heart beat quicker when you come near me? Are your ears keener for my voice than any other? Tell me."

His hands went up and clasped hers. He took her right hand, and pressed it to his heart, and laid her left hand on his cheek, but it was only for an instant. The next his hold loosed; he stepped back a pace, crossed his hands over his breast, and bowed his head, and said in a voice that was almost as low and sweet as her own, and strangely like it:

"The Queen is answered!"

"Not the Queen, but the woman, Meta, and as a woman loves to be answered, and now the woman shall speak——"

"In mercy, no!" he almost wailed, as he sank on his knees and stretched out his hands towards her in supplication. "Think who would speak and would hear. Thou, Nitocris, the daughter of Pepi and the betrothed sister-bride of Nefer, the murdered Pharaoh; thou who wilt reign in his place, and I, Meta, the vowed priest of the Holy Mysteries, the son of Pepi and a bond-woman bought with silver. Thou the Royal-born, I the base-born! Nay, Nitocris, spare me, for thy words are bitterer than death to me."

"I could well believe that Nefer himself had come back from the bosom of Osiris, and was kneeling before me, as once I saw him kneel."

She whispered this very softly, and yet distinctly, and as the words came rippling out from between her half-smiling lips, she took half a pace forward, and stooped a little as she looked down into his face.

"Ah, how sweet thy kisses are!"

"Meta, are you sure that Nefer is dead?"

"Dead," he cried, leaping to his feet. "Dead? How canst thou ask? Art thou not content with torturing me—thy slave who has deserved no ill of thee—that thou shouldst mock me, too? Hast thou not wept over the Pharaoh's lifeless body? Have not the paraschites done their work upon it? Is not his mummy even now resting in the City of the Dead?"

"And have you, O Meta, not yet learned the lore which tells how, with the permission of the Divine Assessors, the souls of the dead may come back from the Halls of Amenthes to do their bidding in new mortal shapes? And to what shape rather than thine, my Meta, should the soul of Nefer return to take vengeance on his murderers? Did not the Gods, who foresee all, make you in the same image—perchance to this very end?"

"The riddle is too deep for me—and yet, methinks, the riddle itself is not so deep as thy words, O Queen."

"Let thy love read it and them, then. Tell me now, Meta, son of my father Pepi, what would you do if your soul were now waiting in the Land of Aalu and the Soul of Nefer were listening to me with your ears and looking at me with your eyes?"

"And if thou——"

"Yes, and if I believed that this were so."

He saw the sweet, red, smiling lips coming nearer to him, and he felt their soft breath on his brow. He saw the deep eyes melting into tenderness as the moonlight shone into them, and in the pale cheeks a faint flush swiftly deepening.

"Nefer or Meta, I am mortal. Priest or no priest, I am a man, and I love thee! Ah, how sweet thy kisses are! Now let the Gods bless or curse, for not even they can take away what thou hast given, and for it I will give thee all—my life, my strength, my soul, my hopes of all that might have been—for none are worth so great a price as this!"

The words came hot and fast between his kisses, and she heard them resting unresisting in his arms, giving him back kiss for kiss, and looking into his eyes from under the long dark lashes that hid hers, half closed.

And so Meta the neophyte, the boy-priest of Ptah, became a man, and so, too, he began to learn the lesson which teaches to what heights and depths a woman who has loved and hated can rise and fall for the sake of her love and her hate.

II.

THE mourning year had passed, and once more the great river had reached its flood-time and spread the swarthy mantle of its annual blessing over the land. Then the waters had gone back and the broad stretches of dark soil had shone with emerald and blazed with gold. The granaries had overflowed with the plenteousness of the river's bounty. Then seed-time had come again, and now once more the waters were rising and spreading out into broad shining reaches, and making the slow, soft music of their rippling steal along the mighty water-walls of the temples and palaces, which for ages had beheld the image of their sombre grandeur reflected in them as in a mirror of molten silver.

For a year all but a day Nitocris had been Queen of the Upper and Lower Lands, and the time had been one of peace and plenty within their borders. In the lands that lie nearer to the Gates of the Morning, her armies had fought many battles and won great glory under the leadership of Menkau-ra the Mohar, mightiest of all the warriors of the Land of Khem, and Chief of the House of War, and now he had come back to enjoy his honours and to indulge the high hopes which the graciousness of the Queen had given birth to.

A week ago the victorious army had brought its spoils and its prisoners across the Eastern frontier, and to-day Menkau-ra had celebrated his triumph in Memphis. The City of the White Wall had laughed and sung and blazed with light and colour. There had been free bread and flesh and wine for the poor, and banquets of royal lavishness for the rich and great, and on every lip was the name of Menkau-ra the Conqueror, and I, Meta, who tell this tale of love and hate, had heard it borne heaven-high on the plaudits of the crowds, who, with their next breath, had shouted for the Queen, and asked themselves why they should not now hail a new and mightier Pharaoh in the place of the dead Nefer.

I had beheld their transports

The Queen rose in her place, and spoke the speech which I had composed for her.

with eyes that looked from under unfrowning brows, and I had smiled again and again as I heard the pealing shouts which linked together the two names which were to me the dearest and the most hateful that human lips could speak; and yet the

One by one dragged down by many clutching hands.

months that had passed since the night when I had first held Nitocris in my arms on the terrace had seen my love grow with every waxing moon, and my fears for the reality of my love-dream fade away with each one that waned.

The manhood which had sprung into being on that dear night was hers wholly for good or evil, for life or death, even as I believed that her young womanhood was mine. And yet, despite this, I had willingly and even joyfully obeyed the commands of Anemenha, who had bidden the whole priesthood of Ptah to instil into the mind of the populace the belief that no more fitting successor to the dead Pharaoh and no worthier consort for their peerless queen could be found than the great warrior who had come to lay the spoils of Egypt's enemies at her feet.

What was I—as I might well have asked myself—that I should set myself up against this idol of the people, this darling of the Gods and the trusted friend of their chief minister? What, indeed? And yet, in many a stolen hour's sweet converse with Nitocris, and many a long talk on sterner themes than love, I had learned many things, and one of them was the lesson that the outward semblance of power and glory may oft-times be as deceptive as a fair woman's smile and false as the sweet falsehood of her perjured kisses.

So did the day of the bridal of Nitocris the Queen with Menkau-ra the Conqueror come and go in a blaze of golden splendour, and now the bridal feast was spread in the great banqueting hall, which Pepi the Wise had made deep down in the foundations of his palace below the waters of the Nile at flood-time, and at midnight the waters would be at the full. It was here that Nitocris had sat at the betrothal feast with Nefer but a few hours before his death, for here he had drunk from the poisoned cup which Anemenha the High Priest had prepared, and here only would Nitocris meet her guests and take her vengeance.

The great hall shone with the light of a thousand golden lamps, which shed their radiance and perfume from the scented oils in which were dissolved the most precious gums of the distant East. The long tables, spread with fair linen and loaded with vessels of gold and silver and glass of many hues and curious forms, flashed and glittered in the glow of the thousand flames. The vineyards of Kos and Kakem and Sais had yielded their oldest and sweetest wines, red, and purple, and golden; the choicest meats and the rarest fruits that ripened under the glowing suns of Khem—all was there that could make glad the heart of man and fill his soul with contentment.

At the centre of the raised table, which stood on a raised platform in front of the great black pedestal of the Colossus of Pepi, Nitocris the Queen sat in her chair of ivory and gold, clad in almost transparent robes of the finest silk of Kos, shining with gems, and crowned with the Uraeus snakes and the double diadem of the Two Lands. On her right sat Menkau-ra, crowned and robed in royal vesture, and on her left Anemenha, in his priestly garments of snowy linen. At the other tables sat their friends and kindred, the families of the Mohar and the High Priest, the chief officers of the victorious army, and all the proud hierarchy of the temple of Ptah, for was not this the triumph of Anemenha no less than of Menkau-ra?

The libations had been poured out to the Lords and Ladies of Heaven, to Ptah the Beginner, and Rah the Lord of Day, to Sechet the Lady of Love and War, and Necheb the Bringer of Victory, and so the last half of the last hour of the night was well-nigh spent, and while the guests were waiting for the signal from the royal table the Queen rose in her place, and in the silence that greeted her her voice sounded sweetly as she opened her lips and spoke the speech which I had composed for her when we made the plot of whose working you now shall hear.

"O, my guests, ye who are the holiest and the bravest in the land of Khem, though our hearts are joyful and our souls refreshed with wine and good cheer, let us not forget the pious customs and wise ways of our ancestors, for it is fitting that in such hours as this our hearts should be turned from pride by the remembrance that we live ever in the presence of death, and that this world is but the threshold of the next.

"Ill, too, would it become me to forget in the midst of my present happiness to pay the honour due to him who wore this crown before me. Wherefore let the noble dead be brought into our midst, so that the soul of Nefer, looking down from the flowery fields of Aalu, may see that in the hour of our joy we do not forget the sorrow of his untimely death."

Then she clapped her hands, and Menkau-ra and Anemenha shifted in their seats and looked at each other with eyes of evil meaning as six slaves appeared at the lower end of the hall, bearing upon their shoulders the mummy-case of Nefer, the dead Pharaoh.

Now low, sad music sounded from a hidden source, and to the cadence of this the slaves marched slowly round the tables, followed by the eyes of the silenced and sobered guests. Then they stopped in front of the Queen's seat, and she said:

"Let the case be set up against the central pillar yonder, and let the face of the Pharaoh be uncovered that I may look upon him who was to have been my lord."

"But if I may speak, Royal Egypt," said Anemenha, leaning towards her, "that would be beyond both the law of the Gods and the customs of the land. To look on the face of the dead were defilement for thee and us."

"Yet this once it shall be done, O Anemenha, Priest of the Father of the Gods!" answered Nitocris, turning and looking into his eyes. "For last night I had a vision that I saw the soul of Nefer come back to his mummy, here in this hall at my bridal feast, and his eyes opened and his lips spoke and made plain to me many things that I greatly longed to know.

"But why shouldst thou turn pale and tremble, thou the holiest man in the land? What hast thou to fear, even if my vision came true? And thou, too, Menkau-ra the Mighty, hast thou slain thy thousands, and yet fearest to look upon the face of one dead man? See, see"—and she pointed her finger at the face of the mummy—"by the power of the just and merciful Gods, my vision shall be made very truth, indeed; look, Anemenha, priest of the God who is king of gods—look, Menkau-ra, thou who wouldst reign in the place of Nefer—behold, he has come back from Osiris to greet you!"

With eyes fixed and ears sharpened by such terror as only the sin-steeped soul can know, they saw the waxen eyelids of the mummy slowly rise, the dim glazed eyes look from underneath them, the dry, black lips move, and heard a thin, harsh voice—which you have already guessed was the voice of Meta—say through the awful silence:

"Greeting, Nitocris, my Queen, greeting from the glooms of Amenthes, where I have waited too long for those who ere now should have stood with me in the Halls of Doom and in the presence of the Assessors. Say now, thou who sittest feasting between my murderers, how much longer must I wait for thee and them?"

"Not long, O Nefer, my beloved, not long. Tarry yet a little while, O, outraged soul, in the shape that once was thine, and thou shalt see thyself avenged! Lo, I hear the wings of Kefa, Goddess of the flood-time, rustling in the silence of the midnight skies. She herself shall pour out a libation to thine injured shade!

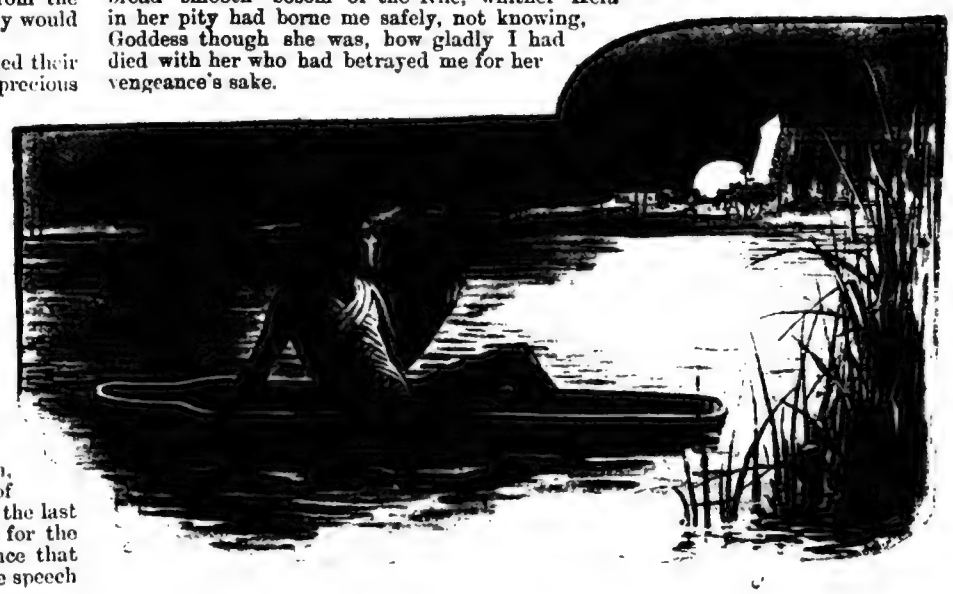
"Nay, nay, my lords, and you good friends of those who did my own true lord to death, sit still and drain a farewell cup with me, your Queen! It is too late to fly, for every way is closed. And hark, the rustling of the wings of Kefa, sweeping through the night! Nefer, my Lord, I have loved none but thee. No base-born image of thee shall fill thy place or take thy throne. I have sinned, but I repent me of my wrong. Lo, now I come and bring thee sacrifice to cheer thine angry heart. My Lord, my Love, I come!"

Held by the triple spell of guilt and fear and wonder, they heard her out in silence, white horror sitting on their blanching cheeks and brows. And I, too—ah, Gods, had I not kissed the cruel lips that said these sharp-edged words?

Then as she ceased she raised her shining arms aloft, a cup, full crowned, between her jewelled hands. A moment high above her head she held it, than dashed it to the floor, and cried in a voice that sang and laughed through the awful silence:

"Come, Kefa, come and bear me to my lord!"

The Goddess answered in a mighty rush and roar of waters long pent and swiftly loosed. Above the roar rose the hoarse shouts of men and women's screams, the crash and clash of tables overturned, the swirl and bubbling hiss of a dark flood that gleamed beneath the golden lamps and swiftly rose towards them, bearing white arms, with outstretched hands gripping at the empty air, the gauzy robes that half hid gleaming limbs, white faces with wildly staring eyes, and teeth that grinned between drawn lips so lately smiling, strong swimmers fighting for another moment's breath, and one by one dragged down by many clutching hands. Then came the sharp hiss of swift-quenched flames, and then darkness, and soon silence, and blind rushing past smooth walls through utter night—and after that I, Meta, knew no more till a cool wind blowing on my brow awoke me from my swoon, and I looked up and saw the stars above me, and knew that I was still floating in the wicker mummy case of the false Nefer, but now out on the broad smooth bosom of the Nile, whither Kefa in her pity had borne me safely, not knowing, Goddess though she was, how gladly I had died with her who had betrayed me for her vengeance's sake.



The Renunciation of Vera Darrell.

By Sophie Hart.

Author of "A Double Ruin," "A Modern Martyr," "A Maltese Vendetta," "Tired Love," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

Moi, aussi, j'ai été cloué sur une croix.

"Mademoiselle Darrell! Forward!"

The Mother Superior's voice rang through the long room of girls, who, in the severe uniform of the *pensionnaires* of the Sacred Heart, sat with demure faces and expectant eyes waiting the advent of her whose name had been thus sternly pronounced. Even the black robed sisters, who flanked the Mother Superior on either side, stirred at the menace of those tones, and one little, shrivelled nun began to fumble at her rosary and mutter an *ave*, hoping thus to avert the wrath to come.

It was a curious scene.

Against the walls of the bare *salle* were ranged on huge comfortless benches the hundred pupils who formed the first section of the Convent school. All were dressed in coarse black-and-white check—their everyday costume—all wore black-bibbed aprons, on the right side of which glowed little coloured rosettes in sign of their different classes, and all wore their hair screwed into a tight knot in the middle of the head that their collars might thereby be preserved as long as possible in a state of spotless cleanliness. Every adornment that might in any way suggest the pomps and vanities of the world was rigidly eschewed, with the result that, to the casual observer, each face bore the same look of starched severity—the same air of prim simplicity. Only a close observer would have detected how unlike in reality was each young face, how widely differing each type.

For there were English faces, girls with their rosy, mutinous charms; French, with their nameless *diablerie*; Germans, with their air of stolid worth; and Flemish, with wide, unintellectual faces. There were even two Indian girls, and one Japanese whose queer little face had earned for her the *soubriquet*, the Idol. In fact, nearly every nationality was represented in this strangely-assorted feminine bouquet, and the little world within the four grey walls of the convent of the Sacred Heart boasted of its miniature jealousies and pains, its embryo tragedies, its wholesome laughter and bitter tears, much in the same way as in the bigger world, only that these young girls had not tasted of the fruit of good and evil, and knew naught of man's love, its feverish delight, and its bitter disillusions.

One or two of the older girls felt there must be other men than the few decayed old priests, who shambled through the great building with tonsured head and sandled feet, though to have confessed to this thought would have been the deadliest of sins.

Vera Darrell had been daring enough to put her impressions on paper, and it was the discovery of this diary that had called forth the rare presence of the Mother Superior, and brought together this large assembly of girls.

"What were they going to hear?" each thought in mute excitement. "Of what misdeed had Vera been guilty?" The expectant hush was so great that the sound of a bee's humming could be distinctly heard, and through the few windows floated the smell of white lilac, Vera's favourite flower.

While they were thus debating, the girl, whose name had been called, rose and advanced with proud step into the middle of the room. Here she halted and stood with clasped hands in front of the small daïs on which sat Mère Marie Dolorosa. Then she lifted her eyes—splendid eyes, in which one saw God—and the devil too, perhaps—and looked straight into the pale, unemotional countenance of her judge, the nun.

The girl advanced with proud step.

"Mademoiselle," again began the stern voice, a voice whose extreme monotony gave the impression that long ago its possessor had buried all emotions that racked, all joys that tortured, striving only to kill the natural woman, and leaving in her stead a bloodless spectre of renunciation, "Mademoiselle, was it not you who wrote this diary?"

"Yes, it was I," replied Vera Darrell. "You broke open the lock of my desk and found it, so there is no need to ask."

"We are at perfect liberty to open any pupil's desk or box at any time. It is our rule, as you know, Mademoiselle."

"A mean rule."

"Then you are not sorry for having penned these words?" touching the copy-book.

"I meant them—every one."

"It is well. I now know how to deal with your rebellious spirit. My children," rising up and gazing round upon the silent rows, "you see before you one who has grievously violated the principles of our holy community; one who sighs after the world and the fleshly pleasures in a manner that belongs only to the sinful. I will read to you the thoughts of this poor misguided child, and you must pray for her and ask God to lead her aright when she is absent from our fold."

"Mère Marie Dolorosa, you are not going to make public all that I hold sacred. I meant no evil by those words—they are but thoughts that came to me and filled my heart."

"It is the punishment you must bear and a lesson I would teach. What right have you, so young in years, to feel like this, and to speculate on sorrows that are known only to God? Was it for this we received you into our midst, for this we taught you to pray, for this we bore with your haughty pride and indomitable vanity? See, you have curls on your forehead to-day, your hair touches your collar, and, alas! I notice also those high heeled boots, which are a snare to the eye and a danger to the ankle!"

"Can I help that my hair curls naturally? And is it my fault that by accident a servant dropped my shoes down the well? Oh, you never understood me, never! You always see in each act an imaginary rebellion, and all the while I mean well. I am sixteen—no longer a child. Why did God give me an intelligence if it is to be set aside as nought, and trained into a groove from which it can never emerge? If I have said aught to offend you in my little book, I ask pardon; but Mère Marie Dolorosa, do not read it out aloud."

The girl, as she made her appeal, seemed to forget that there were others who heard it. She appeared to see only the face of the Mother Superior, with its corpse-like bandages and implacable eyes. In these eyes she read no mercy. Her suffering was very real. She always suffered acutely, just as she rejoiced exceedingly. To look at her face was to see that fact at once, for despite the harsh crudities of the convent wardrobe, the unbecoming head-dress, everyone knew that Vera Darrell was beautiful. Not with a beauty of dainty pink and white, of golden curls, but a beauty in which strange grey eyes played a prominent part, and made one almost omit to notice the pale, flawless skin, the crisp, dark hair, and the passionate, womanly mouth. Added to this, the budding beauty of her tall form gave promise of great charm, and the small, aristocratic feet and hands spoke eloquently of gentle birth and breeding.

The Mother was meanwhile turning the pages of the little copy-book, scanning its contents with a smile of fine contempt. Vera felt she could have struck her. Her hands clenched tightly, she glanced swiftly towards a companion whom she loved, and then the words she had written began to be heard slowly throughout the room.

"I wonder why it is that the scent of white lilac always makes me cry. This afternoon I walked through the avenue with Mère Felise, and that sweet face and the smell of the flowers hurt me somehow. What a sad face Mère Felise has! I do not think that God meant that she should be a nun. If so, why did he give her those beautiful eyes? They told me that she once had such bright golden hair, and that many of the girls cried when they saw it cut off. And I know that she is young—not more than five-and-twenty—and she has taken the black veil, and can never, never leave the convent.

"Something tells me that she has a history. I wish I knew it. Perhaps someone she loved died. It must be awful to love like that—awful to endure a living suicide for the sake of lips that can no more speak—hands that can no longer bless—eyes that will never unclose. And yet I can understand it. Some day I know I shall love someone very, very much. Who will he be and where is he now? I do not think I should care for a very handsome man. I have seen a picture of Paul the Apostle—pale, stern, and strong—and I think I should like to know someone a little like that.

"I worship Mère Felise—she is so queenly—and I despise Mère Ursule, so fat and squat.

"I wonder, too, what is the history of Mère Marie Dolorosa. Has she loved? No—impossible! If she had, and suffered much, she would not be so mean. She would not look into our desks, open our letters, separate two girls who are seen talking together, or take our sweets. All my chocolates disappeared the other day, and I wanted to take them to that poor sick Kitty. It must be horrible to die, and they say Kitty Dene is dying. I wish I could go to the cloisters and see her. Oh! those horrible cloisters! And those dreadful days of illness! Were I to go there again I should die. When I am an old, old woman, I shall think of that month with dread. How lonely were the nights—how bright the moon! It shone into the big, uncurtained windows as though it were mocking me, and I used to think that it was the eye of God.

"It is cruel to put a sick girl in a room from whence she can see the churchyard. The gravestones are so white, the cypress trees so dark, and the little grey church so old. Poor dead nuns—poor girls who are buried there! Can they hear us laugh, I wonder? They should take away too, from the sick room, that tall white image of the Sacred Heart. When I was so ill it held a fascination for me; I counted again and again the six drops of blood that never fell from the exposed heart, and sometimes when the little lamp flickered upon the hand that pointed to the wound,

The ONLY GOLD MEDAL

Reduced Fac-simile of **GOLD MEDAL** *awarded by the Jurors of the PARIS EXHIBITION, 1889.*

ever awarded at any International Exhibition in the world for Toilet Soap was obtained by

Pears

SOAP MAKERS

By Special Appointment

TO HER MAJESTY

The Queen,

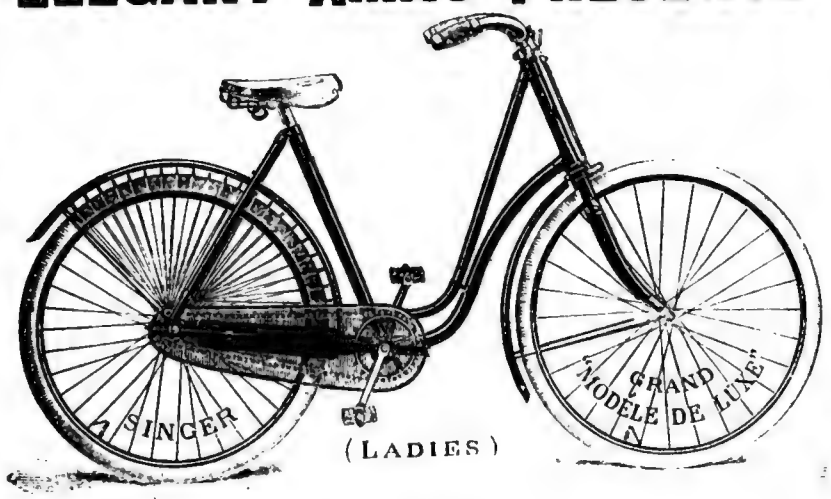
AND HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE

Prince of Wales.

SINGER

SINGER CYCLE CO. Ltd., COVENTRY.

ELEGANT XMAS PRESENTS



THE LIGHTEST COMPLETE CYCLES.

London: 17, HOLBORN VIADUCT.

CYCLES

Fibre Chamois

WILL BE THE

LEADING INTERLINING

FOR

GOWNS, CAPES, AND CLOAKS FOR WINTER.

The "**GENTLEWOMAN**" says:

"Every well-dressed woman sings the praise of '**Fibre Chamois**,' every active woman, every dressmaker, every tailor. By the use of this magic lining our sleeves, our capes, and our coats are enabled to defy crushing, and to keep their shape and appearance to the end."

Fibre Chamois

As an interlining insures the set of a Gown, Cape, or Cloak in a way that cannot be arrived at with any other interlining. It doubles the life of a garment, and keeps it in shape till worn out.

NOTE.—The Genuine Goods bear the Stamp "Fibre Chamois" on every yard. Sold by all the leading Drapers.

Width, 64 inches, price 1 6 per yard. In three Weights.

Manufactured by

THE INTERNATIONAL FIBRE CHAMOIS CO.,

6, 7, 8, and 9,

WHITFIELD STREET, FINSBURY, LONDON, E C.

Reproduced by permission of the Editor of the "GENTLEWOMAN."

I imagined that it moved. And the terrible grey face of Mère Mathilde, and the black cap she wore at night! I have many and many a time cried with thirst, because I dared not call her. I wanted mother then, but she is dead.

"When I go home I shall have Hélène to stay with me for months and months. Although she is in a different class, and we are not allowed to speak together often, I love her even better than Mère Felise. I cannot imagine a nicer girl than Hélène. I am proud of my friend—glad that she is poor, so that when she comes to me I may give her half of all that I have. Father is rich: I often wonder what one little old man can do with so much money, and why he sent me here? But I do not regret it. At times I have been quite happy, and when I go into the world I shall always think lovingly of the old place, and always love white lilac for the sake of the great white lilac trees that grow by the Calvary.

"What I do like about these nuns is that they make not the slightest difference between me, the daughter of Sir Francis Darrell and the poorest of the Flemish girls. I am just Vera—nothing more. Mère Marie Anastasie always speaks of Sir Francis as if she had known him all her life; but then she is so funny, she always curtseys even to a door before she knocks at it. I like her, though, she is like a pink and white cherub with eyes like blue marbles. Yesterday——"

But here Mère Marie Dolorosa halted abruptly and shut the little book. Lifting her cold grey eyes she looked at Vera, and said in a tone not quite without emotion:

"My children, I had not intended to read so much of this deplorable folly, but I could not refrain from setting before you an example of how one may sin when the senses get beyond control. And if any of you at any time feel tempted to err in the same weak fashion, let me beg of you, in the name of the Holy Mother, to scourge and mortify the flesh. That a girl so young should dare to speak thus. That she should think one or another of our community so frail as to lean towards earthly love!

"Our Mère Marie Felise no doubt looks sad through contemplation of the sins of the world. And as for me—oh, to think that I have prayed and striven only to be criticised by an idle, good-for-nothing girl! What can you dream of sorrow? What can you know of the workings of the human heart? You are not a fit companion for all my children—you would contaminate them with your wild fancies, and breathe into their ears earthly, insidious poison. Therefore, much as it grieves me to adopt this measure of harshness, I feel I can follow no other course but to send you back to your father. In a week's time, Mdlle. Darrell, you will leave the convent. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," came back the answer from Vera's white lips. "I am to consider myself disgraced—expelled."

"Those are two harsh words," replied Mère Marie Dolorosa.

"Nevertheless they are the only two that can be applied to me. You have treated me unfairly, *ma mère*, for never by word or look have I spoken to my companions as I have written. You have most unnecessarily read what are, as you say, the foolish thoughts of an imaginative girl—you have turned their thoughts in the same way by reading my little diary. Had you taken me to your room and spoken gently I would have tried to be better, and would have been sorry for my fault. But I am not sorry now, not one little bit. I am glad that you have read what I think of you, and I feel sure that if you loved God as you say you do, you could not judge an offence so harshly—there!"

The rows of listening girls turned pale at the words of their popular idol. How grand and plucky of her to speak thus, and how sorry they were that she was so soon to leave them. There was no one like Vera, so generous, so full of fun, and so pretty. She was their pet, their show girl, and there was hardly a pupil who would not have sacrificed something for her sake.

The pale face of Mère Marie Dolorosa glowed into something like a flush of anger, which instantly died, leaving her paler than before. "Return to your seat, mademoiselle," she harshly commanded; "and you, my children," passing a slow glance around the room, "I forbid you to address Mdlle. Darrell during the week she has yet to remain with us. She will take her meals and recreation in solitude. Kneel; we will now say ten Hail Marys in petition for her wicked spirit. Ah, proud child, may the Lord soften your heart!"

At a little signal, the girls were on their knees, and presently the dreary voice of the Mother Superior began the well-known invocation, the answer coming back in uniform precision from the hundred mouths. For an instant Vera made as though she too would kneel, then she paused. No, she would defy that pale, cruel nun, she would not bow in submission, and so, her lips set in an ironical smile, her eyes flashing, she stood alone among that kneeling throng, silent and unabashed.

The day wore on and no girl had addressed her a word of sympathy. But she knew that they were sorry for her. She knew it from their sympathetic glances—from the sly way they touched her hand in passing—from the little notes that were slipped into a book and left in her desk. Such odd little notes, full of the vehement love schoolgirls are wont to manifest towards each other.

"Darling," wrote one, "you were just splendid this morning. I could have worshipped you. How I wish I could suffer in your place! But I love you. If you look in the corner of my cupboard you will find a bottle of sweets and a packet of chocolate. Eat them, and think of, yours, JEANNIE."

Many such effusions did she receive, but one, and only one, and that from her friend Hélène, in any way touched or consoled her. She cried over what Hélène had written.

"*Ma Chérie*," ran this note, "if you go I go too. I cannot live in this dreary convent without you. We have been such friends. You, with your English frankness, and I, with my French enthusiasm, we have understood each other entirely. I am seventeen, a year older than you, and one does not want to spend one's life at school. Yes, I will come and stay with you in England, and you must come to Paris—*le beau Paris*—which is more beautiful than anything in this world. We will go to Versailles and Fontainebleau, and I will read you 'Ernani' and 'Ruy Blas,' and you will see that a great man, Victor Hugo, thought that love was worth living, worth dying for. Courage, *chérie*.—HÉLÈNE."

Vera kissed the clandestine little note, and then tucked it into the bosom of her dress. Certainly she could never forget Hélène; she would be proud to introduce her father, whom she felt sure would like the dark-haired French girl, with the enigmatical smile and languid eyes. How glad she was of her beautiful home in Carlton House Terrace, and of the horses and carriages and the many servants. Hélène should see that England could be beautiful too, and that no city in the world, not even Paris, was so great and bewildering as London.

The day wore slowly to a close. The pupils had performed their accustomed round of duty, had eaten and played, and were all now in their little white beds, that stood side by side in the long dormitory. The nuns, too, had gone to rest, and, although comparatively early, were sleeping the sleep of the just. But there were two lying wide awake in the vast building—one was Vera Darrell in a dormitory bed, the other Mère Felise in her cell.

And Vera was hungering for a sight of that face, longing to talk in solitude to the woman over whose past she had wantonly speculated.

The clock struck ten, and then eleven, and at last the girl could no longer curb her restless desire. She must creep to the cloister, and, at the risk of being discovered, knock for admission to that lonely cell. Yes, she would slip on her dressing-gown and, barefoot, make her way to the left wing. Accordingly, she cautiously peered up and down the ghost-like avenue of beds, and though the moon shone bright, she saw no one moving. Gently she opened the door, pausing breathless when it creaked ominously, and then she ran up the long, stone staircase that led to the cell of Mère Felise.

When before the grey-numbered door her courage almost failed. Was it not too great an intrusion to open that door? What if Mère Felise were weeping, praying? For she felt sure she would not be sleeping. But she dared hesitate no longer. She knocked. A slight exclamation was heard, and almost instantly the handle was turned from within, and Mère Felise stood on the threshold. Was *this* the black-robed, dignified nun, who walked so calmly through the dreary routine of convent life? This young, slight figure, with the shining curls and beautiful, unbound face? "Oh, how hard to be so lonely," thought the girl.

"Vera, my child," said Mère Felise, drawing the girl gently in and shutting the door, "what brings you here? Do you not know that you are breaking the rules in the most daring way? Ah, Vera, what a little mutinous girl you are!"

"Mother, dear, I came to tell you I am very sorry—bitterly sorry that I wrote about you as I did. I would rather have cut off my right hand than that this should have happened; but I could not guess she would be so brutal, so disloyal as to read it aloud."

"Hush! Do not speak of our Superior thus—it is not right. And, my child, I forgive you freely—indeed I do."

She ran up the long, stone staircase.

"But it must have hurt you so to feel that an impudent girl was presuming to talk of your feelings. I did not mean it. I only love and sympathise with you—for you have—you do suffer?"

"We all have our cross to bear," said the nun gently, "and I have mine."

"But is it heavy—too heavy for you? Oh! you must not stay here. Run away, come away with me. I will be your friend and sister—mine your home."

"You are talking wildly," but Vera saw the quivering lips, "I have chosen this life of my own free will, and am as happy as I ever hope to be. Dear, if I returned to the world again, I should find many loving hands outstretched to welcome me; but the world and I said good-bye to each other years ago. I would not have it otherwise—no, believe me."

"Then you have a history?" cried Vera impulsively.

"Yes, I have a history—a history common to many women. You may learn it too some time, darling."

"Was it to do with love?"

"With love, my child."

"Did he die?"

"He lives still, I think."

"And you have buried yourself here—how could you, you poor, poor darling?"

The nun smiled. How strange the warm girlish pity sounded to her starved heart. She often wondered herself how she had survived this daily suicide, why, in one dark hour of despair, she had walled herself in this convent tomb.

"It was a sin to love," resumed the nun gently, "he was another's—not mine. I was his temptation, and I could not be the one to drag him down. He was, as I, most unhappy; but we should have been more unhappy still had I not listened to the voice of God. With me of the world, his life would have been one perpetual struggle—with me just in it, it is different—he knows I am practically dead."

"Why was it a sin to love?"

"Because he was married."

"Did you not know it at first?"

"I did not know it."

"And when you found it out you were noble enough to go away for his sake—his good. Oh, you darling, holy woman!"

"Not holy, dear, only guided—only guided. Wrong doing can bring no happiness—sooner or later it will overwhelm us. Dark and unbearable as my life has been at times, I shall rejoice if I can meet my God with an unsullied conscience."

Involuntarily Vera knelt by the side of Mère Felise. "Do you know, mother, if I loved anyone I should want them at any cost. I could not pause to question, it would simply be a matter between our two selves. I am sure love was never meant to be a curse, Mother dear, never meant to set aside when two are drawn to one another."

"My little one, have you no sense of right or wrong, no conception of the treason you utter? Will can control environment, and should temptation assail you, surely you will be brave enough to resist it. You are nearly a woman now, and will soon enter the world, and this is why I am speaking so frankly to you. You don't know how beautiful the world may appear sometimes—how trivial wrong-doing—how pallid good. Love is an exceedingly sweet, or an exceedingly bitter fruit—God grant you may only know the former. But I am fearful for you, girlie. Yours is no ordinary nature—who will direct and guide it?"

"I can stand alone," said Vera proudly.

"Alone! You! What of the hours of real isolation which to one of your temperament are inevitable? What of the longing for sympathy? You are extremely pretty, and men will tell you so. You are rich, and every door of flattery will be wide open. If you are wise you will always mistrust men of the world. They are mostly idle, and idleness in men renders them dangerous. A woman should always be on the defensive, armed at every point, lest one day she should be put to the test. I think it is better to prove than to judge people. One is so often at fault, and in our hastiness we are apt to suspect the good and trust the bad. You must look at life through different spectacles than those you use in this little convent world."

Vera kissed her hand.

"You will marry," said Mère Felise dreamily. "Such women as you always marry, and I shall pray that you will find a good man. I do not mean merely one who always goes to church and never omits to say grace. He need never go to church, and yet be wise and true. Would you not like to be some good man's ideal? To share with him his ambitions, to exalt his aim in all things, to love him with a love pure and holy? Surely that would be better than the passion that stings—the strivings for ambitions, cost what they may. And then if you had a little child—a little baby—how you would love it, the more because its father was an upright man. It is a great thing to make the world better for your existence. I speak very haltingly, and perhaps not very wisely; but I want you to be very good when you go away from us—to be true to yourself. Do you understand, Vera, *yourself!*"

"How could I ever be wicked having known you?" said Vera. "You make me wish to stay here always, just to be near you. You seem to calm every wild thought my heart has ever known, and I want to kneel and pray and live for God just as you are doing."

"This is but a little mood; do not mistake it for anything else. You are a creature of impulse, and this is where the danger lies. It may lead you to commit a great sin, followed by a greater martyrdom."

"How you know me!" said Vera. "Mother, dear, am I wicked, foolish? Is there a bad end in store for me?"

The girl lifted her charming face to that of the nun, and one who had left life, and the one who was to learn life, looked long into each other's eyes.

"I once felt as you do," said Mère Felise softly, "but that is long ago. Such thoughts are the crown and the agony of the heart. But everything passes, everything. Flowers and music and love and light. Are you foolish—wicked—you ask? Is there a bad end in store for you? My child, who can tell? Yours is the task of proving worthy or unworthy. Upon you rests the responsibility of your own moral worth. You will have to fight and struggle, and wrap round yourself a mailed purity. But if you strive earnestly to do right, God will help you.

"Remember what I tell you, will you? And some day when to you comes your sorrowful hour, think of me, of this lonely cell, and the Calvary in the Garden. Think that there is someone who prays for you—one who wants you to be a true woman. Think that it is only by overcoming temptation that we ever become great, and that one day you hope to meet your mother. Oh, I could say many things, but my heart is full, and you, you naughty little girl, you are breaking the rules. This shall be our good-bye—and—— Shall we kneel together and pray that you may be true to yourself? Shall we, darling?"

With tears streaming down her cheeks Vera knelt. How near she felt to God! How she loved this holy nun! Then she dropped her face between her palms and prayed as she had never prayed before.

When she rose it was a very pale and resolute young face that turned itself to Mère Felise.

"I am going to try to be very good," she said simply.

"That's my brave child."

"And you will always pray for me?"

"Always."

"Good-night."

As the two women wept, the elder bent towards the younger and laid her pure lips upon her brow.

A minute or two they stood thus silent, and then softly Vera turned to go.

God was very near to the little schoolgirl that night.

* * * * *

A week later and she was saying good-bye to all her friends. They clung round fondly, they thrust little presents into her hands, begging that she would not forget them, and Vera smiled and wept at the same time. She felt no disgrace in leaving the convent; she had meant no sin, and from her father she had nothing to fear. Her one regret was in leaving Hélène and Mère Felise. The former she would see again; the latter—God only knew when she would meet the latter. Some time, perhaps, in His blue Heaven—she would try to be worthy.

Wistfully she looked upon the great convent gates as they swung to behind her; yearningly she looked at a sweet face that from her cell was wafting her a blessing. Half-regretfully she glanced towards the little churchyard, with its silent dead and its cypress trees. The Calvary, the lilac tree, the chapel—all soon faded as a dream.

The monotonous days, the long, still nights, the laughing and the praying—all would soon be as though they had never been.

"Why does your friend alway sit upon me?"

CHAPTER II.

FOUR years have passed since Vera left the Convent of the Sacred Heart—four years that have served to heighten her charm, and make her one of the most noted and popular women of the great London world.

But she was not quite content. Something seemed to have died, or to lie sleeping so deeply that it was as if dead—the beautiful enthusiasm of the old days, when she had written down in daring arrogance the high flown sentiment that had been the cause of her expulsion.

The season was at its height. Her table was covered with invitations for everything worth seeing or going to, and she was regarding the long round of visits as so many profitless days and nights.

For this year only seemed a replica of the last. She had met the same variety of pale, weary-looking men, had listened to their platitudes with ill-concealed scorn and wonder, had gone from ball to reception, from reception to ball, and now, although only twenty, she began to sigh for something more than the well-bred smirk of society, its petty shams and heart-breaking lies.

She unfortunately possessed a soul—what that means I do not pretend to define—but she had one. She had also an exceptional mind, a thing that the average human being resents. In society all that is required is to be smart and to look pretty, both of which *rôles* Vera admirably fulfilled. But she talked well and talked sense, and society does not like sense. Although brilliantly advanced and well-read, she was not at all "new" in the vulgar fashion of to-day. She did not smoke, or ride a yearling; she did not go slumming, nor did she affect coster songs and skirt-dancing. She was simply herself—dainty, capricious, and most exclusive.

It was a beautiful day. Through the lace curtains the flowers in the window-boxes sent forth inviting scents. In the distance was the rumble of cabs, the continuous murmur of Piccadilly, and the thousand sounds that go to form the glory and mystery of London. This suggestion of mystery was always a never-ending source of speculation to Vera, and there was nothing she enjoyed so much as a drive through the vast lamplit thoroughfares, and to watch the strange types of humanity that passed by on good or evil intent.

"Dreaming as usual?" broke in a voice with a French accent and a delicious *timbre*. "Do you forget that there are two young men coming to tea, and that you will have to be entertaining?"

Hélène Colomba advanced into the room, and at a glance it could be seen that Vera's old school friend had greatly altered. The French girl looked considerably older than the English; but then the former was so emotional.

"The teacups are ready; I am in your favourite tea-gown; the only things required are the tea-pot and the young men. What a flirt you are, Hélène!" was the somewhat erratic reply.

"I—a flirt!" echoed Mdlle. Colomba, taking a little chair at the knees of Vera. "I am not the least bit of a flirt. It is your *jeunesse doré* who are so stupid. They sit round one in a little circle and suck the knobs of their sticks, and if one addresses them they blush. Why are all the young men so pale?"

"How you exaggerate, *m'amie*! To hear you one would imagine that this world was peopled by effete young men with pallid complexions. I grant you that there is an *embarras* of this type; still, there are some who do not merit your scorn."

"*Par exemple?*"

"Aubrey Scott, Frederick Blair, and one or two others. You know you like Freddy, although you snub him so unmercifully."

"You are too delicious for words in your lilac tea-gown. Freddy is coming to our box to-night. Shall I wear white or blue? Not that I am sure that I shall go after all. White is so *spirituelle*, as Mère Marie Dolorosa would say. How astonished those poor nuns would be, could they see how frivolous we are. Do you ever think of the old convent days?"

"Often—and occasionally I feel rather ashamed of myself over that diary episode. That wretched Mother Superior was not so devoid of heart, after all. She actually said in parting that if ever I were in sore trouble or distress, I might make the Convent my home of refuge. Fancy such an emergency—horrible!"

"One never knows," murmured Hélène.

"Mr. Blair," announced the footman, and a young man entered the room, smiling blandly.

Frederick Blair, or as his friends called him, "Dodo," was tall and pale and slim. He wore his sleek, black hair parted in the middle, an eyeglass in his left eye, perfectly fitting patent leather boots, and clothes of an irreproachable cut. He pretended to be stupid; but in reality he was clever, and he possessed a profound contempt for girls at large, and married women in particular.

He was, however, decidedly attracted towards Hélène Colomba. "She's so confoundedly wicked," he mentally affirmed, "and she really is the only creature that dares to tell me what she thinks of me," which reflection showed that Blair was by no means the fool he affected to be. Women had spoilt and run after him to such an extent that he got to think that merely to smile upon them was a condescension and that to talk to them a waste of brain tissue.

"How do?" he said, bending over Vera's hand, and holding that of Hélène in the ridiculous mid-air fashion.

"Don't be so absurd," said Mdlle. Colomba, promptly giving his elbow a knock. "I hate to look like a fool, and of all foolish things it is this," and she made a charming and scornful imitation of Blair's gesture.

"I think it is rather pretty," said the rebuked one, "and *you* who pretend to wish to know a few of our English manners—I was only educating you. Miss Darrell," turning his cool eyes upon Vera, "why does your friend always sit upon me?"

"I suppose she thinks you require it."

"I?—so modest and so young. I shall go and weep in a corner."

"Lord Ivor," again announced the footman, and another spick and span young man, with a gardenia in his coat, sauntered into the room.

"Hot, isn't it?" he queried, after having paid his respects to the ladies. "I thought of going to Hurlingham this afternoon, but I concluded I should be more comfortable here."

"How condescending!" murmured Vera. "Do you really play polo, Lord Ivor? I should have never given you credit for so much energy."

"Never judge by appearances," replied Lord Ivor, who in truth looked as if he were only fit for a mild canter in the Row, or to sit in a lady's boudoir. "I ride like the very——, and then I have the energy to admire the prettiest woman in London," bowing low before her.

At that moment the tea was brought in, and the conversation became general. Lord Ivor trotted round with the cream and sugar, while Blair looked on and methodically sipped his tea.

The ball of conversation was kept rolling with that easy dexterity that Vera so detested, and they were animatedly discussing whether an elephant or a camel would be the more comfortable to ride, when the door unceremoniously opened to admit a bronzed, handsome man, who was greeted with the utmost surprise and cordiality.

"Why, Jack, old man, when did you return?" asked Blair, shaking the newcomer's hand with enthusiastic warmth, that made Hélène think that his habitual nonchalance was but a mask.

"I thought you were in the blue Mediterranean," said Lord Ivor.

"I am very glad to see you," said Vera with a slight blush.

"I think I'll go away again, merely for the pleasure of such a cordial welcome," said Jack Delamere, bowing with easy grace to Vera. "When did I return, Blair? Yesterday. Why am I here instead of in the blue Mediterranean, Ivor? Because I've had enough. I've been away six months, and I began to feel homesick for the old country."

"Surely there were plenty of nice people there," remarked Vera.

"Yes, but you know," turning and speaking to her softly, "I only think of one woman's face, and she will not smile on me."

"You take sugar?" returned Vera; "you are as foolish as ever—I'm not worth it."

"Dear lady, you are worth more than I can ever say." Then in an ordinary voice: "What have mademoiselle and you been doing to enjoy yourselves since May? Has any new star arisen in the artistic or literary world? Any births or marriages of interest? You know I'm quite a stranger."

"I have done nothing but eat, drink, and be merry," broke in Hélène. "Your London is an admirable place—almost as nice as Paris. We ride in the morning in that fascinating Row, we shop, make visits, and drink cups and cups of tea—we theatre—we go to balls and receptions. We flirt, and laugh, and yawn, till dear old Sir Francis says we're incorrigible. Your English women are very rude, some of them. The other day at a great house a lady of title scratched my shoulder with a bracelet because I did not move up the stairs quick enough. I turned round and thanked her, and everyone laughed. Tell me, why do people with the name of Smith and Jones always put another in front of it—Mrs. De Ponsonby Smith, Mrs. Golightly Jones, and other such funny things?"

"I think if I were called Ham, I'd christen myself York-Ham," drawled Freddy Blair; "Ham's quite horrid, but York-Ham——"

"I did not speak to you, Mr. Blair," replied Hélène frigidly; "and when you've finished with my confession book, I shall be glad if you will return it."

"If you speak to me like that I'll do—what that old dowager did the other evening."

"Monsieur!"

"I mean it. Don't monsieur me! How charming the conservatory is looking—come and pick me a flower."

"And one for me too," chimed in Lord Ivor.

Then she passed into the beautiful conservatory beyond, the two men following in her wake.

Vera did not move, and Delamere flung himself into a vacated seat by her side.

He did not speak, but, resting his chin upon the palm of his hand, looked at her long and earnestly. How infinitely well she pleased him. Had she been ugly instead of beautiful she would still have charmed and intoxicated. The very way she moved, smiled, was different to other women.

"Why do you look at me so strangely?" asked Vera, lifting her hand as if towards a light that scorched.

"Because I love you."

"You are very unwise," was the reply, "and you know that I do not care for you to say this. I thought that your voyage would have cured you."

"I shall never be cured," he responded. Then, without cringing, he continued gently: "How you must have changed since you were sixteen."

"I? In what way?"

"Do you remember you showed me a fragment of that diary for which you were expelled? Is it possible that you once felt like that?"

"Everything is possible."

"Does nothing move you now?"

"Many things move me."

"What, for example?"

Again he looked at her. He half closed his eyes, but never took them off the superb pale face, with its grey eyes and mouth that promised much, and that as yet had fulfilled nothing.

"What moves me," she echoed, leaning back and playing with the violets at her breast. "I think that I am one great responsive pulse, only I have schooled myself since those old convent days. I never open my tiny study now."

"Are all your relics lying there undusted and untouched? Strange child!"

"Surely you do not remember my relics?"

"I remember every article of that little locked room. For instance, against one wall there is a large *prie-dieu*, above which hangs the charming portrait of a nun—Mère Felise, I believe you call her. A bookshelf filled with a heterogeneous mass of literature, amongst which I noticed a large illuminated copy of '*La Vie de Jésus*.' Then there were six rosaries suspended above a Madonna, and beneath each is the name of a girl. There are all sorts of weird little pictures—a knight kneeling before the bier of his dead love, a Magdalene with tawny tresses, Faust and Mephistopheles, a glorious head of Christ and a great wreath of immortelles taken from the grave of a school friend. There is a harp, the portrait of a woman signed 'Nita,' and a stuffed snake. Oh, yes, I remember every detail of that odd little chamber, which seems to me to contain the ghosts of many dead women; but not the one I now know. I sometimes wish you were your old, enigmatical self, instead of the great lady I now find you."

"Oh, my dear Jack, that's very foolish! I'm more interesting as I am in the eyes of the world, and the world is now what I practically live for. To let the everyday mortal loose in my study would earn for me the reputation of a mad woman. The days of painted saints and stuffed snakes are passed, though perhaps I might perchance be rash enough to let the old unrest flood me. As it is——"

"Well, I will not bore you—I will wait. Meanwhile, is there nothing that I can do for you—no theatre you would like to see?"

"You look uncannily beautiful," said Hélène.

"Come to dinner to-morrow," ignored Vera. "I expect some rather amusing people."

"May I bring a friend with me—a man I met while travelling, and certainly one of the most interesting I ever had the good fortune to run across? He's half Russian by birth—a Prince Rasselas."

"Bring him, certainly; but as to his merits, of those I will judge myself. Men and women hold such totally different ideas on the subject. Your sex, as a rule, lifts up a creature who can row like a Hercules, play football like a barbarian, turn the horizontal bar like an acrobat, yet scarcely string a sentence without a 'By Jove!' or a 'Dontcherknow.' Englishmen are so very British in their tastes."

"And our women so very French. However, I think the Prince will satisfy your most fastidious requirements. He indulges in none of these vulgar traits. He rides like a Nimrod, duels like a demon, and talks like—like—a novel."

"Jack, I quite like you sometimes," said Vera gently, and before he had time to reply Hélène waltzed into the room.

"A pound for a little white rosebud pinned in by my own fair hands—it's cheap. Mr. Blair offered me five, but I was magnanimous. I told him if he gave me five I should spend four on a new bonnet."

"Mademoiselle shows a contempt for bonnets scarcely human," said Blair; "but she has promised to be very entertaining at dinner to-morrow."

"And when mademoiselle deigns to be entertaining, *c'est quelque chose*," and she made a delicious little grimace, which made Blair think he would like to kiss her.

By-and-bye, when the drawing-room was deserted of guests, Hélène came across to the sofa and took the face of Vera from between her hands.

"Your Jack is nice," she announced.

"My Jack!" was the sharp echo. "I wish you would not say such absurd things. I've never taken a real interest in a man yet, and I don't think I ever shall."

Hélène laughed and shrugged her graceful shoulders, and then sat down at the piano.

"*Ninon, Ninon, que fais-tu de la vie!*" she softly sang.

And as she listened Vera answered low:

"*Moi, qui n'ai pas d'amour!*"

And while the wooing notes floated through the room and the scent of verbena wrapped her caressingly, the thought of Prince Rasselas suddenly came to her.

"I wonder if he will please me," she thought.

CHAPTER III.

She stood in the drawing-room waiting to receive her guests, her father by her side. An ex-Guardsman, very wealthy, and with a manner at once gracious and proud, old Sir Francis was one of the most popular of men both amongst young and old.

Extremely proud of Vera, assured of her tact, intellect, and essentially high-bred instincts, he troubled his daughter very little with the trifling creeds and conventionalities daily instilled in some young Englishwomen. He allowed her free scope in her friendships, unlimited pin-money, and all the dainty requirements of an ultra fastidious girl; and so long as she looked charming, rode well, and gave good dinners, he did not trouble himself about the inner life and aspirations of his young daughter, a fact for which she was at times profoundly thankful.

Vera knew that her mother had been a *grande dame*, that she was expected to be the same; and although for the white-haired old courtier at her side she entertained no very absorbing affection, she, too, was proud of him.

"You are very charming to-night," said her father, looking at her with keen, critical glance. "How few women would your dress become, and yet in its audacious simplicity it arrests more than the most gorgeous of gowns."

A dead white satin dress absolutely unadorned by lace or trinket. A snake with emerald eyes was round her dainty waist, a smaller one coiled round her white throat and a huge uncut emerald worn low on the forehead; this was what Vera wore, and the admiration extended by her father was more than merited.

"You look uncannily beautiful," said Hélène pausing in front of her friend.

"And you realistically charming," laughed Vera.

"I have good taste in dress," agreed Hélène, with glorious vanity, "but for the first time in my life I feel *bourgeoise*. I hate all this fluffy chiffon, but then I know I'd look like a Pope, stuffed, if I wore what you wear. Ah, here is that horrid Mr. Blair—must he take me in to dinner?" and Hélène sauntered off, and pretended to be immersed in a family album which was upside down.

"Are you going to be very sweet to-night?" presently asked Freddy Blair, who with equal nonchalance had found his way to her side.

"If by sweet you mean stupid, then I'm not. Please do not sit on my train—the other guests are arriving."

Gradually the room began to fill, the last comers being Jack Delamere and Prince Rasselas.

"Dear me, what an interesting-looking creature," said Lady Bevil to Blair. "'Prince Razzle-Dazzle,' did the footman say? Half Russian, is he? I wonder if he's got a tame bear, and if he knows Siberia? You must introduce him the very first opportunity, my dear Freddie. I'm longing to get a really new face at my evenings—the old ones begin to bore me terribly."

Prince Rasselas was indeed an interesting looking man. By no means as handsome as Jack Delamere, he yet presented an admirable contrast. Tall, yet so perfectly-proportioned that he seemed less than his real height, his cold, fair face was marred by a short and somewhat coarse nose, and relieved by superb grey eyes, and finely-curved, enigmatical mouth. His hair was fine, silky, and looked thin; his moustache small, and beautifully kept; added to this he possessed two rows of teeth so dazzlingly white as to be almost unpleasant. But his charm was in his manner. Few men, and still fewer women, could resist it, and where he made up his mind to conquer, the battle was already decided.

Vera experienced a singular thrill as the stranger bent above her white hand, and when, later on, he led her in to dinner, she was conscious all the while of his deep attention, and that she was not quite so self-possessed as usual.

He talked most brilliantly, and she listened with real pleasure to the apt and able criticism upon men and things. There appeared to be no subject into which he had not dived, no problem he had not studied, and all the while he conveyed to Vera—how she knew not—that he thought her gifted with an intelligence, and worthy to be treated accordingly.

Prince Rasselas knew quite well how to appeal to the susceptibilities of this girl, who interested him more than the ordinary run of feminine creatures. With subtle tact he divined that no compliment to her beauty would sway her one tithe as much as would this undoubted homage to her intellect. She was entirely different to the artificial creatures he constantly met with. Women of tinted cheeks and lips, and tired, painted eyes. Women with sickly blood and worn-out nerves. He felt Vera to be endowed with all the splendour and intensity of youth; the extreme freshness of maidenhood, and he wanted to please—to know her better.

"Delamere was a fool to bring me here," mused the Prince. "That he is seriously *épris* I know. However, all's fair in love and war."

Acting upon this principle, he, later on in the evening, made his way to Miss Darrell's side, and although extremely careful not to appear to monopolise her, he nevertheless made his preference for her society so felt that no other man lingered near her more than a few minutes.

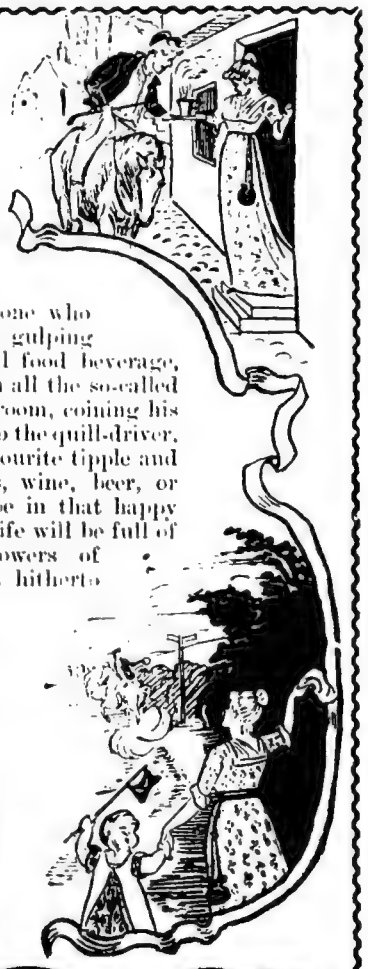
"You evidently have a passion for flowers, mademoiselle," said Prince Rasselas, after passing his eyes round the fine drawing-room, and finding them at every turn confronted with great bowls and vases of sweet-scented blossoms. "But you surely do not like camelias," pointing to a great plant of the waxen flower that partially hid one fireplace. "They are too like a cold woman to please me—they tell me nothing."

"I like camelias," lifting her great eyes to those of the man beside her; "they leave one so absolutely unmoved. It is a relief sometimes to turn to a flower void of perfume—too much sweetness cloys."

"I do not think you mean what you say," was the reply. "To disdain a flower

The Proof of the Pudding is in the Eating

All Ye who Eat and Drink.



We can more safely say that the *profit* derived from the digestion of the pudding is the main point, and that digestion which, as far as the pudding is concerned, is the be-all and the end-all; and it is in that *vital* point that Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa has proved itself victorious over every other food beverage in the market to-day. Anyone can satisfy themselves on this point, and if anyone who reads this is suffering from a deranged or sluggish liver, let him or her leave off gulping down spirits, beer, tonics, drugs of all sorts, and try and prove this most wonderful food beverage, which will do more to promote and maintain a healthy action of the liver than all the so-called remedies. To the sedentary brain-worker who sits hour after hour in a stuffy room, coining his thoughts into current literature, to the lawyer poring over his brief or reading hard to the quill-driver, we say, take to Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa. Give up your favourite tipple and take to Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa—be it tea, coffee, spirits, wine, beer, or ordinary cocoa—and you'll find after a week or so you'll be in that happy state that you won't know you have a liver, and your life will be full of sunshine. The unique vitalising and restorative powers of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa are being recognised to an extent hitherto unknown in the history of any preparation.

But

Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa is made up in 6d. packets, and 9d. and 1s. 6d. tins. It can be obtained from all chemists, grocers, and stores, or from Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa Limited, Suffolk House, Cannon Street, London, E.C.

Merit, and merit alone, is what we claim for Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and we are prepared to send to any reader (a post-card will do) who names *P.W. Xmas No.* a **dainty sample tin of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa free and** post-paid.

Can be Tested - Free. -

DR TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa

OGDEN'S GUINEA-GOLD CIGARETTES

3D. per packet

MADE IN ENGLAND

SMOKED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

KEATING'S COUGH LOZENGES.

"91, Commercial Road, Peckham, July 12th, 1889.

"Dear Sir,—I am a poor hand at expressing my feelings, but I should like to thank you. Your lozenges have done wonders in relieving my terrible cough. Since I had the operation of 'Tracheotomy' (the same as the late Emperor of Germany, and, unlike him, thank God, I am still alive) performed at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, no one could possibly have had a more violent cough; it was so bad at times that it quite exhausted me. The mucus, which was very copious and hard, has been softened, and I have been able to get rid of it without difficulty.—I am, sir, yours truly, J. HILL."

UTTERLY UNRIVALLED.

The above speaks for itself. From strict inquiry it appears that the benefit from using Keating's Cough Lozenges is understated. The operation was a specially severe one, and was performed by the specialist, Dr. H. T. Butlin, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Since the operation the only means of relief is the use of these Lozenges. So successful are they that one affords immediate benefit, although from the nature of the case the throat irritation is intense.

WEIGHT IN GOLD.

Under date Sept. 8, 1891, Mr. Hill writes: "I should long since have been dead, but for your Lozenges—*they are worth their weight in gold*. I will gladly see and tell anyone what a splendid cough remedy they are."

KEATING'S LOZENGES are sold in tins, **1s. 1½d.** each. The unrivalled remedy for **COUGHS, HOARSENESS,** and **THROAT TROUBLES.**

because of its perfume. Say rather that you rejoice in all the subtle scents of Nature—jasmine, heliotrope, and the deep damask rose. You are essentially an artist, and is not a flower without scent one of Nature's inartistic productions?"

"How did you guess that I so love flowers?" returned Vera. She felt as if this man were talking to her soul—as if something that had long been sleeping had begun to stir its languid life, in fact, as though she were again a girl at the convent with her vague longings and impassioned dreams.

"You like to think yourself dead to all emotions, do you not?" pursued the Prince, never taking his eyes off the flower-like face. "You like to pretend that life for you is a closed volume, that it would be impossible for love or passion to approach you—in fact, that you are a *blasé* nineteenth century young lady. You have not even *begun* to live. Am I right or wrong?"

"You are trying to make me very interesting in my own eyes, and I am but very ordinary," answered Vera, unfurling her fan and waving it slowly. The scent of the bowl of lilies at her side was most oppressive. She smiled vaguely, and then she saw her face in a mirror opposite.

She was startled at its look of passionate whiteness and expectant beauty; then felt angered that she was moved out of her accustomed calm.

"Ah, Lady Bevil," she cried, arresting the pink one, who passed her with the express intention of being detained. "Come and talk to me—I have scarcely said a word to you the whole evening. Let me also introduce Prince Rasselas to you."

"Charmed to meet you," said Lady Bevil, sinking slowly into a chair by the Prince's side. "I intended to speak to you before I left to-night—I love Russians."

"Madame flatters me," returned the Prince, casting an unfathomable glance at Vera; "and may I ask what my countrymen have done to merit this free gift?"

"You're so mysterious—such brutes," answered Lady Bevil calmly.

"My dear lady," murmured Vera.

"I always say what I mean," answered Lady Bevil who kindly named her crude rudenesses originality. "Aren't you cruel now?" tapping the Prince as though she would accentuate his interest in the question. "Don't you use the 'crout,' 'sprout' or 'knout' whatever you call it—and don't you blow up people, or send them to Siberia on the slightest provocation?"

"Madame is evidently better informed than I—I therefore bow to her superior knowledge."

"Ah, I knew I was right. Prince Rasselas!"

"Madame!"

"You don't happen to have a dancing bear with you?"

"A what?"

"A bear. I'm going to have a big At Home on Tuesday next, and long for a new importation. I had Indian jugglers last time, and a man from the Bachelors' Club was deliciously funny. It would be so original to have a big shaggy bear prancing into the room!"

"And I should have to prance as leader. Much as I wish to please you, madame, my menagerie only consists of one small monkey, and he is in consumption."

"Poor thing! How sweetly sad. My maid is just like a monkey, but thank goodness she's not in consumption. How long have you been in London, Prince?"

"I came in Mr. Delamere's yacht the day before yesterday. It's quite five years since I was in London."

"I thought I didn't know your face."

"Five years ago," said the Prince, frowning slightly, "I had not come into either my title or my heritage. So if you had seen my face you would not have remembered it."

"And are you a gay and giddy bachelor?" proceeded Lady Bevil calmly, impervious to the Prince's satire.

"Madame is evidently better informed."

"I have the felicity, or misfortune, to be single," replied Prince Rasselas, stooping to brush a speck of dust off his knee.

"Plenty of nice girls in London who'd be pleased to have you," said this odious old woman.

"Old ones, too, perhaps," Vera could not refrain from saying in retort to the coy and furtive leer Lady Bevil cast in her direction.

"Heaven preserve me from marrying!" said Lady Bevil. "My dear Vera, when you love horses as I love them, you'll find the biped man very uninteresting. *Firebrand* is entered for the Derby, and my trainer tells me he has a very good chance. Dear me, how very *décolletée* Mrs. Lindan is! I'd like to cover her up with leaves, like the robins did the babes in the wood."

So saying, she moved on to where Sir Francis was standing alone, and, by the wicked chuckles he was soon indulging in, it might have been premised that Lady Bevil did not clothe her anecdotes in verdant green. The ex-Guardsman frankly averred that there was no one so odiously frank, so frankly odious, as Lady Bevil.

"That old lady is inhuman," said Prince Rasselas; "she ought never to have been born. The knout would do her a world of good. Your English aristocracy is a funny institution. Tell me, do you not sing? Will you not sing something when that very good-looking boy has finished warbling?"

The "good-looking boy," pale, and with insolent blue eyes and the elegance of an old courtier, was assuring the company that he "came from the desert on his Arab shod with fire," and as his showy voice rang through the room, a certain feeling of sentiment momentarily ran through the assembled guests, and Hélène whispered to Blair: "He was a man, that Bedouin!"

"What a very unpleasant person to meet in a London drawing-room! You should hire a camel, go into the desert, a Ruth searching for Boaz. What is that little biblical story, mademoiselle?"

"You are more paltry than ever. Ah, Vera is going to sing! Now we shall have a treat."

"By Jove!" thought Prince Rasselas, "what a beautiful woman, and how she piques me. Talking to her is like taking a draught of rare wine. What eyes! what lips! I've half a mind to enter the ring—she's worth every risk and danger—the old trouble is as good as dead, and she would make a charming princess."

Vera sat down at the piano. The subdued light of many lamps shone around her: a hush, full of expectation, was her tribute, and as she half turned round on her seat she met the piercing eyes of the Prince.

He smiled; she answered with a smile upon her lips and sang a little old world song. It was not of love, but of a little dead child who was never to know "life's fitful fever." Jack Delamere, as he listened, felt a great pang at his heart, and that life would be absolutely void and useless without yonder woman. Then as he saw the eyes of Rasselas turned immovably on Vera, he mentally ejaculated: "Hang it! I wish I'd never brought that fellow here."

When Miss Darrell bade good-bye to her guests the Prince said in parting: "May I come and see you to-morrow? I have a curious old volume I should like to show you. It will not bore you to look at it?"

Vera felt she would have given much to have refused the request. She did not want to see this disquieting man so soon again. Nevertheless, she acquiesced.

"You drive with me to Hurlingham to-morrow afternoon," said Delamere, who was the last to leave. "You cannot come, you say? Why? Is that brute coming to see you?"

"You know, my dear Jack, I never permit my actions to be criticised—when they are brutally criticised I have only one answer."

"Ah, don't forbid me to come! I was a fool. I had no right to speak like that. Forgive me, Vera. Think that I am mad—jealous. I have known you so long, and he only for one day."

"Evidently you think the length of one's acquaintance merits extreme familiarity of speech. If you are wise you will not come to see me for at least some days. Good-night."

Outside the Prince was waiting, and without noticing Jack's moody eyes he slipped his arm into that of his companion and walked towards Piccadilly. The incongruity of the situation amused him. Here was he wishing to knock another man down, and compelled to walk arm-in-arm with him and listen to his conversation.

"You are not very amusing to-night, *mon cher*," presently remarked the Prince, pausing an instant to light a cigar and to extend his case to Jack.

"I don't feel amusing."

"Has your fair one proved unkind, or your dinner disagreed with you?"

"I don't know what you mean by my fair one, and as for my dinner I never criticise my host's *chef*."

"Whew! You must indeed have indigestion. My dear friend, to criticise is half the joy of life. Now it affords me immense pleasure to realise the beauty of Miss Darrell, *par exemple*—to review each detail of her dress, and to try and carp thereat. If I could, I would say her gown was too severe for one so young, but I am forced to confess it became her admirably, and also that she is tantalisingly lovely."

"Hang your remarks," said Jack quietly. "I'm in an infernal bad temper to-night, and so you must excuse me. I don't think I'll come to your chambers now, thanks. I think you're right, I must have indigestion."

"And indigestion makes one at times horribly love sick," said the Prince blandly between the whiffs of his cigar. "Poor chap," he thought a few minutes later as Jack branched off to St. James's, "Englishmen are always so ponderous in their feelings—they have not learned the art of concealment. I like the fellow though; he's such a thorough contrast to some of the young bounders one meets."

Prince Rasselas was about to enter his chambers when he was startled by a voice calling: "Serge."

Turning sharply round he found himself face to face with a man of some forty years, irreproachably dressed, a pair of opera-glasses and a programme in hand, evidently just returning from a theatre.

"Hawksland! You!" said the Prince, his face growing momentarily paler. "Where on earth did you spring from?"

"I've been rather successful of late, and, as London is the place of all successful people, I migrated here. I can't think it's three years since we met—you were neither rich nor a prince then."

"Don't be retrospective—there's nothing so banal as retrospection. Besides, I'm like a snake; I've shed the skin of my old life, and remember nothing, or, at least, only that which it is convenient for me to remember."

"But you cannot make others shed their memory, Prince. The last time I saw you——"

"Yes, yes, I know. Suppose you forget all about the last time you saw me, and take your mind back to that little episode at Monte Carlo?"

"My dear Serge, I don't want to rake up old times," returned the other hastily, "we've all got little pages in our lives we don't want anyone to know of, and I'm not a man to concern myself inconveniently with other people's affairs; neither of us have anything to gain by a too minute review of our pasts. Therefore, if I can do anything to help you, I shall be pleased. You needn't be afraid that I'm in want of money. I, too, have had quite a comfortable legacy left me."

"Come in, my dear Hawksland, and we'll talk over old times. As we meet on an equal footing, that footing may as well be friendly. Come on."

They entered a large and fastidiously furnished room replete with every comfort and characteristically revealing the nature of the man who occupied it. Great easy-chairs were placed invitingly around, a low divan with luxurious cushions stood against one wall, and near the fireplace a huge screen studded with photographs of women—women blonde and brune, ethereal and material, with bared shoulders and faultless arms—ranged in fantastic groups. Some bore their Christian names, a date, or perhaps a tender little quotation. All were beautiful.

On one side of the opposite wall was a huge plaque draped with red velvet, on which were hung daggers of every conceivable description in size, shape, and nation. In one corner drooped a banner on which some woman had embroidered the words: "*Tout pour la gloire, rien pour l'amour.*" "A sensible woman, that," the Prince always affirmed. On the mantel-shelf a head of the Sphinx, mute, implacable, with all the pain and mystery of the desert in its stony eye, several odd-looking idols, and one or two extremely valuable, but misshapen statuettes. The table was littered with all the most up-to-date books; an ebony bookshelf contained well-bound and well-read volumes of older and more famous writers. A jardinière near the window was full of carefully tended and beautifully scented plants. A fine piano stood invitingly open, a half-finished manuscript on its stand. In the air was the faint aroma of good cigars, and an exquisitely cut-glass tantalus in a silver stand was on a small table. Altogether, over the whole room there hung a certain attractive grace, and Hawksland, as he looked admiringly round, said enthusiastically and without envy: "By jove, you *are* cosy."

"Why not?" answered Rasselas. "Since one has to live one may just as well try to do it as artistically as possible."

"You always did contrive to kick the football of fate in whatever direction you chose. Aren't you afraid that some day fate may retaliate?"

"Afraid? I? I was never afraid in my life, and the more difficult a thing is of

FINEST BREAD IN THE WORLD.

AS USED IN THE QUEEN'S HOUSEHOLD.

Windsor Castle,
Dec. 7th, 1886.

Dear Sir,—Her Royal Highness Princess Christian desires me to express to you her very great satisfaction with the Malt Bread, Biscuits, and Rusks provided to her. Her Royal Highness considers them all most excellent.

Yours truly,
RICHARD TAHOURDIN.

DR. ANDREW WILSON says: "This Bread should be eaten by all who are in anyway affected by digestive ailments."

Agents wanted where not already represented.

Ask your Baker for

BERMALINE BREAD.

"Nature's glorious crown"

DR. WILSON'S Hair Restorer.

NEVER FAILS TO PRODUCE THE RESULT FOR WHICH IT IS SOLD.

From all respectable Hairdressers & Chemists.

PRICE: 1/-, 1/6 & 3/6 PER BOTTLE.

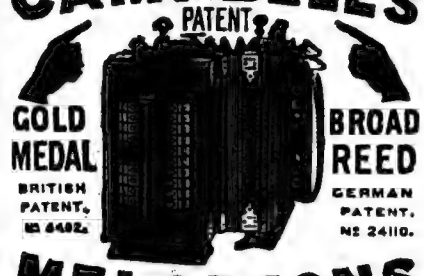
OVER 7,000 DOZEN BOTTLES SOLD LAST YEAR.

Wholesale only:
PARTON, SON & CO.,
5 & 6, Bull Ring, BIRMINGHAM.

BEST XMAS PRESENT
Or New Year's Gift.

MUSIC IN THE HOUSE MAKES CHEERFUL HAPPY HOMES

CAMPBELL'S



MELODEONS

Have the Largest Sale of any Musical Instrument in the World.

HAPPY HOURS FOR ALL.

NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE.

CAMPBELL'S World-famed MELODEONS have Organ and Celestial Tone and Charming Bell Accompaniments. The Solemn Psalm, the Soul-stirring Hymn, the Cheerful Song, and the Merry Dance can all be played on these Charming Instruments.

NO KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC IS REQUIRED BY THE PLAYER.

The Best Instrument for the Family Circle, the Concert Room and the Dancing Party. A Charming Companion for the long Winter Evenings.

CUT THIS OUT AND SEND WITH ORDER

CAMPBELL'S PATENT MELODEONS.
NO DECEPTION HERE.
MONEY RETURNED IF NOT SATISFIED.
SPECIAL OFFER TO THE READERS OF *PEARSON'S WEEKLY CHRISTMAS NUMBER.*

CAMPBELL'S "GEM" MELODEON, 8s. 9d.
CAMPBELL'S "MINIATURE" MELODEON, 10s. 6d.
CAMPBELL'S "PARAGON" MELODEON, 14s.
CAMPBELL'S "FAVOURITE" MELODEON, 16s. 6d.

Worth Double the Money. Selling on Thousands.

Either of the above sent CARRIAGE PAID to any address in Great Britain on receipt of P.O.O. Order at once.

NO DECEPTION HERE.
100,000 TESTIMONIALS.

TESTIMONY FROM MR J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.

"After duly testing the Patent Melodeon supplied to me by Messrs. CAMPBELL & CO., I have much pleasure in saying that it is a most marvellous production at the money. It is got up in excellent style, the finish being superior. It is, besides, a strong and durable instrument."

Important Testimonial from PROFESSOR BROWN, the CHAMPION Melodeon Player of Great Britain, Ireland, and Wales.—"Campbell's Patent Melodeons are the finest instruments that have ever come under my touch, and only require a trial to advertise themselves."

CAMPBELL'S PATENT MELODEONS ARE THE ONLY GENUINE MELODEONS IN THE MARKET. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

N.B.—All lovers of music should at once send for our New Illustrated Privilege Price List for season 1887, now ready. 150,000 of these valuable lists sent out yearly. Send Penny Stamp to

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers,
116, TRONGATE, GLASGOW. (Est. 50 years.)

The greatest beautifier in the World. Produces a lovely skin and complexion, and cures spots, pimples, redness, and freckles. The finest and purest soap made. For **Eczema** and all irritations it is the most emollient and soothing. Absolutely harmless. But beware of the many worthless imitations. Have Dr. Mackenzie's or none. At all Chemists and Stores, 6d. and 1s. a tablet.

Madame Adelina Patti writes from Craig-y-Nos Castle: "I find Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap most excellent."

100, Trevelyan-road, Tooting, S.W., Aug. 19, 1886.—"Sir, I am more than satisfied with the result of Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap. Although I have used it only one month the effect is marvellous.—Yours truly, EMMELINE MCANDREW. You are at liberty to publish this letter if you think fit."

PASTA MACK

FOR BATHS AND TOILET USE.

TRADE-MARK.

PASTA MACK

Is made in Perfumed Tablets containing Carbonic Acid. Sparkling and Effervescent when placed in the bath. This excellent health-giving preparation **SOFTENS THE WATER**, giving it a most delicious odour, and **BEAUTIFIES THE COMPLEXION** in a most extraordinary way.

PASTA MACK

On account of its excellent perfume, is used by the highest titled ladies throughout the world, and at the principal European Courts.

SHOULD BE IN EVERY BATHROOM AND BEDROOM.

To be had of all Chemists and Perfumers throughout the World.

Sole Manufacturer and Inventor, H. MACK, Ulm, o/D.

Wholesale Agents for Great Britain: OSBORNE GARRETT & CO., London, W.

The True Story of George Heyling

THE tale told itself at once; some scattered garments lay on the beach; a human head was just visible above the waves at a little distance from the shore; and an old man, wringing his hands in agony, was running to and fro, shrieking for assistance. The invalid, whose strength was now sufficiently restored, threw off his coat and rushed towards the sea, with the intention of plunging in, and dragging the drowning man ashore.

"Hasten here, sir, in God's name; help, help, sir, for the love of heaven. He is my son, sir, my only son!" said the old man frantically, as he advanced to meet him. "My only son, sir, and he is dying before his father's eyes!"

At the first word the old man uttered the stranger checked himself in his career, and folding his arms, stood perfectly motionless.

"Great God!" exclaimed the old man, recoiling. "Heyling!"

The stranger smiled, and was silent.

"Heyling!" said the old man wildly. "My boy, Heyling, my dear boy, look, look!" Gasping for breath, the miserable father pointed to the spot where the young man was struggling for life.

"Hark!" said the old man. "He cries once more. He is alive yet. Heyling, save him, save him!"

The stranger smiled again, and remained immovable as a statue.

"I have wronged you," shrieked the old man, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands together. "Be revenged; take my all, my life; cast me into the water at your feet, and if human nature can repress a struggle, I will die, without stirring hand or foot. Do it, Heyling, do it, but save my boy; he is so young, Heyling, so young to die!"

"Listen," said the stranger, grasping the old man fiercely by the wrist. "I will have life for life, and here is one. My child died before his father's eyes, a far more agonising and painful death than that young slanderer of his sister's worth is meeting while I speak. You laughed—laughed in your daughter's face, where death had already set his hand—at our sufferings, then. What think you of them now? See there, see there!"

As the stranger spoke, he pointed to the sea. A faint cry died away upon its surface; the last powerful struggle of the dying man agitated the rippling waves for a few seconds, and the spot where he had gone down into his early grave was undistinguishable from the surrounding water.

* * * * *

The above is only part of the story of George Heyling, who was cast into a debtor's prison by his father-in-law for debt. During Heyling's incarceration his only child died, and in a few months poor George's wife died in his arms, and was buried by the side of her boy. George Heyling's health broke down under these awful blows, and a raging fever consumed him, necessitating a constant watch by his bedside for many weeks, but he slowly recovered to find himself a rich man, for his father died intestate. He went to the sea-coast, and here some evil spirit cast in his way the opportunity for his first most horrible revenge as described above.

If the reader cares to send a stamped envelope to The Hop Bitters Company, 41, Farringdon Road, London, a book, "Choice Bits" from Charles Dickens' Works, will be forwarded, one of the "Bits" being the story of George Heyling.

Many people have suffered quite as much as George Heyling, but in a different way. Take the case of Mrs. Wilson, of 9, Crowlace Road, London, S.W., who on August 21st, 1885, writes as follows:

"GENTLEMEN, For years I have been suffering from Liver and Kidney trouble, with great pain in my back, dizziness, and indigestion, no doubt brought on through leading a sedentary life. Hundreds, nay, thousands, must suffer for years the same as I have done, because most people would do as I did—visit the doctor. I have had no less than six medical men attending me in four years, but thanks to your medicine, I am now enjoying remarkable health, and can eat everything with comfort.

"I came to know your medicine through your book, 'Choice Bits,' and purchased the Hop Bitters at my Chemist's. I hope everyone who reads this, and suffers as I did, will try Dr. Soule's Remedy, for I find now a dose once or twice a week keeps me in sound health. (Signed) CATHERINE WILSON."

"To the Hop Bitters Co."

The Great Family Medicine for Indigestion, Kidney, Liver complaints, is Dr. Soule's Hop Bitters. It is not a Beverage, but the medicine required by Nature. It is not enough to ask for Hop Bitters, you must ask for Dr. Soule's Hop Bitters, and take no other, no matter how you may be pressed. Nothing equals this medicine as a remedy for the young, middle aged or old, but be sure it is Dr. Soule's Hop Bitters, and see that our Trade Mark, a cluster of Green Hops, is on each label. No other medicine was ever copied or counterfeited as this has been. To be had of Chemists, Stores, and Medicine Venders, price 2/6 and 4/6 per bottle. If you cannot obtain it in your district, send to us at 41, Farringdon Road, London, and we will forward direct, carriage paid.

J. THEOBALD & CO.'S SPECIALITIES.

OUR SUPERB CHRISTMAS BOX PARCEL OF NOVELTIES.—Magnificent prizes given away free of charge to our customers. Prize coupon in every parcel. One prize guaranteed to every ten persons sending in. Prizes: 100 Golden Sovereigns, 100 Half-sovereigns, 100 Five-shilling Pieces, 100 Real Silver Watches, 500 Framed Oil Paintings, 500 Clocks, 500 Keyless Watches, 500 Real Gold Brooches, 500 Real Gold Rings, 500 Silver Brooches, 500 Silver Rings, 500 Silver Pins. These prizes are actually given away—there is no trickery about them. Each parcel contains a pair of very handsomely carved Wall Brackets, one representing a blacksmith at work shoeing, and the other in the form of a magnificent stag; a beautiful Miniature Photograph, mounted in ivorine frame, representing Old Father Christmas, with powerful magnifying glass complete; Glass Mirror in frame; large carved-out model of a Tramcar, made to take to pieces and put together again, and which moves along the ground; Yacht Race Game, consisting of a coloured board representing the sea, nine little movable model yachts; a large size figure of a Mechanical Clown; Nanky Poo, the real Japanese Doll; one of England's Brave Defenders, standing 15 in. high; six Christmas Cards; Scrap Book, with a variety of Scraps included; coloured Story Book, 'Ten Little Nigger Boys'; the game of Blizzard, with board, revolving disc, and balls complete; packet of Block Peter, a card game; packet of cards for Snap; 100 Japanese Fairy Fire Stars; the Magician's Album; real Japanese Fish Game, containing 12 Japanese Fish and two double-jointed fishing rods; complete game of Lotto; Marvellous Swimming Frog; also a packet of Fortune telling Cards. Grand Family Card Game of Robinson Crusoe, the Flutina Bagpipe (the New Japanese Musical Instrument), the Magic Maze, the Square Card Puzzle, the Maltese Cross Puzzle, the Magic Scissors Trick, the Performing Egg Trick, and the curious Optical Illusion of the Coster and the Obstinate Donkey. All packed in a strong parcel, carriage free, for 2/6 each, or two parcels for 4/6. In each parcel is a Prize Coupon, which entitles you to a chance of obtaining one of the valuable prizes.

THE CELEBRATED BIJOU MAGIC LANTERNS AND SLIDES.—These sets carry the palm over all others. Each set is packed in a handsome box. All of superior English make. Will give satisfaction everywhere. No. 1 set comprises a best English-made lantern, fitted with two lenses, paraffin lamp, glass chimney, silver reflector, 60 really comic figures on 12 long slides, 3 complete nursery tales, each tale having 12 pictures on 4 sides, making 36 more pictures; 2 comic slipping slides, 2 moving panorama slides, 1 "Good-night" slide, 1 "Welcome," 1 man swallowing rats, 2 Chinese firework slides, 1 rockwork slide, 2 lever slides, 1 Queen, and 1 curtain slide, making 109 pictures in all, complete with instructions, giving a picture on the sheet 3ft. diameter.

Also 6 extra long Slides. Price 10/6. No. 2, precisely similar, but having a No. 2 Lantern and No. 2 Slides, forming a larger size throughout. Gives a picture 4ft. in diameter. Price 14/6. No. 3 size, much larger still, very suitable for a special present, gives a 5ft. diameter picture, 21/-. Special Bottles Chemical Oil, 1/-, 1/6, 2/6.

OUR SUPERB PARCEL OF CHRISTMAS CARDS. Magnificent Prizes given away Free of Charge to our Customers. Prize Coupon in Every Parcel. One Prize guaranteed to every Ten Persons sending in. Prizes: 100 Golden Sovereigns, 100 Half-Sovereigns, 100 Five-Shilling Pieces, 100 Real Silver Watches, 500 Framed Oil Paintings, 500 Clocks, 500 Keyless Watches, 500 Real Gold Brooches, 500 Real Gold Rings, 500 Silver Brooches, 500 Silver Rings, 500 Silver Pins. These Prizes are actually given away, there is no trickery about them. We did the same kind of thing last winter, and one out of every ten persons got a Prize. Names and addresses of winners in your district on receipt of stamp. Try your good fortune at once. Our No. 1 PACKET OF CHRISTMAS CARDS, 2/6, carriage free, contains cards to shop value of 10/6. The parcel, weighing 1lb., consists of 100 cards, comprising the Mechanical Negro Lovers Card, with movable donkey; Magnificent Three-fold Embossed Shaped Card, "For Auld Lang Syne"; a Three-fold Embossed Shaped Horseshoe Card, embossed frosted ivy leaves, with laced edge, and trellis-work of gilded bells; a unique Three fold Jewelled Card, "For Auld Acquaintance," with embossed heather corrugated edge; "The Old Window Casement," unique mechanical card, with windows to open, and movable heads, with effect of sunlight glow and evening shade, prettily embossed and with trellis-work; "The Dear Old Homestead," with overhanging eves cut out to shape, embossed swallows nesting, beautifully frosted with floral emblem, three-fold; the Ideal Mechanical Shipping Card, with movable changing sails, corrugated border; "The Swallows' Return," embossed primroses with ferns, corrugated edging; Three-fold Comic "Candle Lecture" Card, with changing heads; "The Bicycle Girl in Rational Costume," Beautiful Four-leaf Booklet, with Cupid page; Mechanical Circus Card—a really funny pug jumping through hoop held by comic French clown; "The Judge and Jury Poultry" Card, three-fold, with comic wording; "A Christmas Message," pretty two fold landscape card, surmounted with loops of Forget-me-nots; also 12 Frosted Cards, 6 Two-fold Cards, 6 choice Ivy and Rose Cards, 6 Comical Cards, 12 Floral Cards, 6 Landscapes, 6 Sea and Lake Scenery, and 31 other Choice Assorted Cards. Entire lot carriage free for 2/6. Two parcels for 4/6.

The No. 2 Parcel contains 24 all Recherché High-grade Cards, 2/6, post free. No. 3 Packet, 50 Cards, assorted, 1/3, post free. No. 4 Packet, 12 Cards, assorted high-grade cards, 1/3, post free. Each packet contains a Prize Coupon. Buy your cards where you not only get the best possible value for money, but where you get the chance of a valuable prize in addition, free of charge.

CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENTS of every description, for full particulars see Catalogues. Boxes containing nice assortment of candles, reflectors, gloss balls, fancy boxes, candlesticks, and fancy lanterns, carriage free, 1/3 and 2/6; specially recommended ditto, splendid value, 5/6, 10/6, 21/-, and 42/-; Artificial Frost, 8d., 1/2, and 2/6 per box; Artificial Moss, 8d. per bundle; Father Christmas Mask and Beard, 1/3, 1/9, and 2/6; Artificial Christmas Trees, 1/6, 2/6, and 5/6; Christmas Lanterns, assortment, various shapes and colours, 1/3, 2/6, and 5/6; Masks of Animals and Figures of every description, Nigger Theatricals, Wigs, Suits, &c.; boxes of Theatrical Make up, Powders, Paints, &c., 2/6, 5/6, 10/6, and 21/-, with full instructions; Spangles, 8d., 1/2, and 2/6, assorted cases.

Games, Puzzles, Fancy Articles, Jewellery, Toys of every description.

We have Thousands of Articles, all up to date. See our Illustrated Catalogue.

J. THEOBALD & CO., 19, Farringdon Road, London, E.C.

achievement, the more I like it. For the first time for many years I have serious thoughts towards matrimony."

"The dickens! You! What about that——"

"Hush, hush, my dear Hawksland; no questions. I merely state a fact. I never allow the past to interfere with the present, especially when I've indulged in the luxury of a genuine emotion. Women have always run after me, and now I feel inclined to run—on all fours, if necessary—after a woman."

"She must be deucedly uncommon to rouse you."

"That's just what she is—uncommon. I have cast around to whom to liken her, and I find no one. They are absolutely like untouched negatives compared to an exquisitely painted picture. She has no conception of her capabilities, but those I will teach her."

"She certainly could not have a finer master. But you forget your old theory—to be successful one must be more or less heart-whole—and that organ of yours seems to play an important part in this transaction, I should imagine."

"You don't suppose that I should be fool enough to lose my head—I'm too old a stager for that. I know women," and he leant back in his chair and laughed. "One has not a screen full of photographs without having learned from their originals some trick or manner. The little, purring blonde requires a different song to the languid, dark-eyed brune; a child of nature different treatment to the woman of the world. To the one, one must kneel; the other—she must kneel. Oh, the dear creatures, they profess to be so profound, and they're as simple—as simple as Eve! What about yourself, Hawksland? Are you a respectable *père de famille*, or are orange-blossoms still a thing to come? Am I yet to bring my presence and title to a marriage in high life?"

"Beastly satirical, as usual," said Hawksland; "but, fortunately, my hide is tough. No, I'm not yet married, nor have I cast my unholy eye upon any fair damsel. The fact is, I don't want either a young or a pretty wife. My nerves require someone who will never cause me a moment's anxiety; so the older, the uglier, and the richer she is, the better. You don't happen to know some old maid?"

"I can't say I've met such an anomaly; but I did to-night run across the fattest and most odious old woman it has been my lot to meet for months. She bombarded me with thoroughly British and insolent questions, and ended by regretting that I had not in my possession a dancing bear that might be useful at one of her At Homes. As she's rich, got a fine stable, and could be safely warranted to raise not the faintest flutter in any man's breast, I should go and offer myself as her dancing bear, if I were you."

"Bah! I know the type of lady you mean. My good Serge, I don't suppose there's a bigger sinner than myself on this earth, but I won't saddle myself with such a penance. Think, too, if she grew fond of me——" and a genuine shudder ran through the form of Hawksland.

"Think, too, if she grew fond of me."

"Well, everyone to his taste. Personally, I find it so novel, so—so *piquante*, to feel a genuine emotion, that I hug it carefully lest it should turn out like so many others—a myth. I always knew that I had a vein of sentiment hidden somewhere in my composition, for, despite the fact that my ancestors were considered brutes, I have inherited a profound, endless melancholy peculiar to the Russian mind. Of course, I may have indigestion after a remarkably good dinner; to-morrow I may wake up and laugh at myself. Not going, surely? Why, the night is young. Well, since you must, have a whisky and soda and a cigar to see you home?"

"I'll look in again soon and see how you're progressing. Meanwhile rely upon me for any service, though if a friend may speak plainly to a friend it's a dangerous game you're playing, Serge, a dangerous game. Good-night, I'm feeling beautifully moral and shall therefore go straight home. Ta, ta!"

A great stillness reigned over all things after Hawksland had departed, and Rasselas with his fingers thrust through his hair sat thinking deeply. His face would have had an immense fascination for a student of physiognomy could he have studied it unobserved. A singular look of tenderness was in the eyes, an expression of ferocity and voluptuousness around the mouth, while the coarse nose, by its very coarseness, seemed to convey more daring and strength of purpose than the most finely chiseled of features. Small wonder that women trembled beneath the caress of that delicate hand, and listened entranced to love spoken by him, as it is rarely spoken.

Rasselas was reviewing his past life, cynically, brutally, unreservedly; and yet there was no regret in the review. It was not in him to regret anything. He had a convenient theory that we all are the playthings of chance, and that if chance placed an uncommonly pleasant thing in our path, it would be the act of a lunatic to refuse it on moral grounds: thus he never spared woman or friend. He would have made a superb leader of men, but Heaven help the wretch entirely in his power.

Naturally the image of Vera played an important part in his thoughts, an image so entrancing that he grew positively annoyed at its persistency. With his refined, sardonic divination of character, he knew that the nature of the girl in question was a problem few, if any, would ever solve. It was that intangible air of mystery that so piqued his jaded fancy. "Just the sort of creature to win by a *coup*," he mused, "but the hand that plays the game must be skilled beyond the ordinary. Queer, Hawksland's turning up just at this crisis; but he's safe, though I shouldn't feel sorry to hear that he had been drowned in the Serpentine or met some equally convenient fate. And yet, would the game of life be half so interesting were there no risks to run? I'll dare every danger to reach her; dainty, charming child."

He went over to a writing-table, and, unlocking a drawer, took therefrom some letters and one or two photographs. He coldly scanned the former, and as coldly the latter; then an ironical smile curved his lips. "Poor devils!" he murmured, and threw the packet back into the drawer.

He returned again to his chair, lit a cigarette, and took up a book lying face downwards on the table. It was a volume of poetry, virile, voluptuous, sad; a production of one of these later-day poets into whose blood the played-out weariness of living has entered.

The Prince sneered as he turned its pages. He thoroughly despised himself for the interest that he took in this "morbid trash," and yet it was one of those absurd contradictions that this man, who could, unmoved, have watched another's torture, was childishly swayed by poetry. He loved it as he loved opium, and all things that made him dream; but not for worlds would he have had it known that he was such a consummate fool as to be moved by a few jingling lines strung together.

Nevertheless, he was deep in the enjoyment at the present moment of a lover's plaint to his mistress, and he imagined that he was raining kisses on the perfect mouth of his beloved—that she was in his arms. The poem finished, he flung the book savagely across the room, and pouring out a glass of wine, he drank it at a draught, then another, and still another.

"To your grey eyes, *ma belle!*" he cried, and then passed into the room beyond.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCE RASSELAS called the next day at Carlton House Terrace, and for many days following, and each time he found himself more than ever enamoured with its chatelaine. She, though conscious of the immense attraction of the man when with him, was somehow restless and ill at ease when face to face with her own thoughts. In a way, that she had never dreamed possible, this comparative stranger read her many moods, and played upon and swayed her with an almost satanic intuition.

Delamere saw the growing infatuation, and felt helpless. He knew sufficient of Vera to realise that the faintest protest would not be tolerated, yet so cordially did she treat him that, had he desired to question, this suave manner would effectually have silenced him more than the most frigid of miens.

How he cursed the day that he had first met the Prince—how he jeered at his praise of him to Vera—how he wished he could communicate to his love the thousand torturing doubts he harboured against the stranger, only a man who loves loyally and well can gauge.

As it was, he could only seek her presence humbly and without complaint—he could live in the hope that he, perchance, might prove useful; and if she never needed him, well, he could always glory in the thought that he had loved one of God's sweetest and loveliest women.

Hélène looked on and wondered. None but she saw the alternating moods that seemed to shake her friend's soul like an ague, and many and strange were the confidences exchanged by the two girls.

"Do you love this man?" asked Mdlle. Colomba one evening, as they sat brushing their hair and talking over the events of the past day. "Does the creature of your imaginative convent days really exist in the flesh? You are so cold, *chérie*. At times I have never seen a woman more adorable, at others one more detestable."

"No one could be more self-critical than I," returned Vera, passing the comb slowly through her dark curls, "and no one, at times, more unhappy. Do I love Rasselas?" she continued. "If to love a man means that you are filled with unrest and wonder, that you hate, and yet bend, to his will, that you are delighted, yet appalled, at his intimate knowledge of your feelings, then I love him; but if to love a man means that perfect trust is yours—absolute trust and immense respect—then I do not love him.

"I tell you," her voice rising excitedly, "there are times when I could go to the world's end for that man—when he meets my mood so entirely that I seem one with him—others when I loathe the touch of his hand and the veiled approval of his glance. I am sure that he is not good—that his one god is self; and yet, when, as the other night at the opera during that exquisite overture, he looked at me and smiled, and then, without speaking, just touched my hand with his, as if to say 'I understand,' I felt so moved that I could have bowed my head on his knees and sobbed."

"I should call such an influence morbidly hysterical, *ma chère*," said Hélène drily. "Personally, I distrust M. le Prince. Mind, I do not deny his fascinations; they are more than sufficient to turn an older head than yours. Neither do I question his caprice or love for you. He would not be the selfish epicure that he is, did he not instantly feel the peculiar charm of your eyes and smile. But how long would an emotion last with him? A week, a year, a day, and if you felt yourself ever so slightly neglected, oh, the tragedy queen! Of course, it's delightful to be understood, we all feel that, but no man will ever understand a woman as can another woman. Ah, my pretty one, have I ever failed you? and do I not worship your sweet self? If I thought that this thing was for your good, I would rejoice with all my heart, but the love of Rasselas is evil. Why not love Delamere? What a splendid fellow he is! You, and you only would be his joy and thought. I do not suppose he is perfect, no doubt his life is starred with a few caprices; but they would never insult the memory of the woman he loves. While the other—his life is rank with poisonous weeds which will, in time, choke your existence."

"You are admirably eloquent. What has the poor Prince done to merit your condemnation, and what Delamere to be thus exalted? If you know me, as you say you do, you would understand that a marriage with him is impossible. He's so intensely heavy—so distressingly frank. Life with him would be utterly void of anything approaching a surprise. Suppose I were in a mood to tell him one day that I regretted that I was not born a vivandière, an empress, a king's favourite, a nun, anything you like, he would look at me and think that I had suddenly taken leave of my senses. Rasselas, on the contrary, would enter into the spirit of my mood—would bow to it, nay, approve."

"What of the man you once dreamt that you could love, a man with a face like Paul the Apostle, pale, stern, and strong. I tell you, you love a disciple of the devil, pale with wrong-doing, and neither stern nor strong. He is a production of the age, and like most that is nineteenth century, rotten to the core."

"What about Freddy Blair? Is he not essentially *fin-de-siècle?*"

Hélène blushed slightly. "Yes, I suppose he is what you English call up-to-date. His clothes are correct, his collar correct. He is audaciously *blasé*, and bitten with the most advanced theories of life. But he is honourable—I feel sure he is honourable, and if only one could persuade him to drop that effete and nauseating society air, he would be quite a fine character. And yet I suppose he would not be Freddy Blair without those little tricks. He is wonderfully amusing—his pale face deliciously attractive. I dislike him, though——"

"Really!" said Vera. "Strange, the different forms dislike may take. When one dislikes a person I suppose one must look glad to see them, ride with them, sit with them, in fact look insanely happy in their society. Ah, *ma belle Hélène*, you cannot deceive me. You have found your master in that pale young man, and I honestly believe—now, don't blush—that you have made the conquest so many have tried in vain to effect."

"You think so—you really think so?" asked Hélène, for the moment off her guard. "No, no; love is much too primitive a passion for Monsieur Freddy," sighing softly; "but we are great friends, and always shall be. I do wish, though, your prince would go away, he disturbs me."

But Prince Rasselas had not the faintest intention of departing. He had never been so thoroughly fascinated by anyone in his life as he was by Vera, and he

The Housekeeper's Page

"Excellent, Most delicate, and Refreshing." "The Queen."

CHOICE IN LEAD PACKETS AND FANCY TINS

DULCEMONA TEA

YOUNG, FRESH, INVIGORATING.

@ 1/6 to 2/4 Per lb of all Grocers

AWARDED GOLD MEDAL AT THE EMPIRE OF INDIA EXHIBITION. 1895

EVERYONE SHOULD DRINK

RED WHITE & BLUE FRENCH COFFEE.

Delicious for Breakfast or After Dinner.

PERFECT, as CAFÉ NOIR or CAFÉ au LAIT.

In making, use rather LESS QUANTITY than of ordinary Coffee, it being so much stronger.

☞ HAS AN ENORMOUS SALE!

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

Ladies

READ, MARK, LEARN. - - -

Doctors all recommend

Robinson's Patent Barley

AS THE BEST

BABIES' FOOD.

71½ Years' Reputation.

HERBULINE.

FREE In proof of the merit of Herbuline, all sufferers from Neuralgia, Tic, and Tooth-ache are cured on the spot and in the time named on calling at our office. Address below.

We hold a letter of thanks from the **Magistrates of the City of Glasgow** for curing sufferers during the hard winter two years ago. Over **350** cured on the spot.

ALL OTHER REMEDIES PALE BEFORE THIS SCOTCH WONDER-WORKER.

NEURALGIA and **TIC** cured in **20 Minutes.**
TOOTH-ACHE " **30 Seconds.**
RHEUMATISM " **24 Hours.**

HERBULINE is free from Acids or Poison, and it is used externally. Directions with each bottle.

FOR nine years we have given these free test cures over 50,000 have been treated successfully.

"Herbuline is a household word, its properties being really as marvellous as the discoverers claim for it."—*Evening News*, E. 1.90.

Sold by Chemists and Stores at 1/1½ per bottle, if posted 3d. extra. STOCKED by all the first Wholesale and Retail houses in the kingdom.—**HERBULINE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 67, Renfield Street, GLASGOW.**

10/6 DRESS AND CAPE 10/6

A Beautiful Autumn Dress with Stylish Shoulder Cape to match for 10/6 complete. Black Alpaca and Crepon Costume Skirts, 9/11. Lined Coats, 9/6. Send for Patterns and Illustrations to FRANK MURGATROYD & CO., Church Bank, BRADFORD.

GOLD MEDAL & DIPLOMA

Irish Tweed Clothing

Is the most durable. Send for samples of material and Self-measurement Forms, which will be forwarded Post Free.

SUITS from **29/6** to **57/-**
TROUSERS from **4/11.**

OUR FAMOUS FOXFORD TWEED SUITS at **40/-** are unrivalled.

—o—

The Foxford Tweed is made in the Congested Districts of Connemara by IRISH GIRLS, under the Superintendence of the Sisters of Charity. FIT GUARANTEED or money returned.

Bankers—The Bank of Ireland.

Serge Business SUITS to measure, **17/6.** Unequalled for Value! Hundreds of unsolicited Testimonials received.

ALL GOODS CARRIAGE PAID.

THE Limerick Clothing Factory, LIMITED, LIMERICK.

"BUNTER'S NERVINE" and "PURILINE" are recommended by over 3,000 DENTISTS and MEDICAL MEN.

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Cures TOOTHACHE Instantly.

Relieves NEURALGIA Instantly. 1/½.

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction, Sleepless Nights Prevented, Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains Removed.

"Very severe cases under my care have found instantaneous and permanent relief. Having used it with invariable success, I recommend its use to the profession and the public."—*J. Bonnell, M.D., F.R.C.S.*

"Owing to extensive decay in two double teeth I suffered for days excruciating pain. I was recommended to try Bunter's Nervine. I did so. To my joy, the pain quickly and entirely ceased. I have since repeatedly derived the greatest possible relief in severe neuralgic headache from four to five drops of Bunter's Nervine, taken upon a lump of white sugar."—*Rev. Aubrey C. Price, late Fellow of New College, Oxford.*

A Pure and Perfect Article for Teeth, Gums and Breath.

PURILINE REGISTERED TOOTH-POLISH.

Price 1s., of all Chemists, Perfumers, &c., post free. A. WILSON, 21, NEWPARK RD., BRIXTON HILL, LONDON, S.W.

H. M. STANLEY, D.C.L., LL.D., the Great African Explorer, says: "I use Puriline 'Tooth Polish' and 'Wash'; am much pleased with both."

THREE GREAT HOUSEKEEPERS' BOONS

TRY ONE. TRY ALL.

1 Rules for Starching and Ironing, a valuable Little Book. Post free 2 stamps. 3

2 Once tried Always used

Get them MACK'S DOUBLE STARCH CONTAINS IN PROPER PROPORTIONS CLOSS BORAX GUM WAX & & Try them

REQUIRES no addition or preparation. SAVES time, labour, and uncertainty. PRODUCES beautiful white glossy linen. UNIQUE. No other like it. UNRIVALLED. Sold in 1d. Packets, or 3d. and 6d. Boxes.

RISING SUN STOVE POLISH EASIEST, QUICKEST, CHEAPEST, & BEST BLACKLEAD IN THE WORLD

In HALF the TIME with HALF the LABOUR you can produce MORE POLISH with TWO Penny Packets of RISING SUN than with HALF-DOZEN of ordinary Blacklead. Sold in ½d., 1d. & 2d. Packets.

RISIN' SUN METAL POLISH GIVES TO ALL KINDS OF METALS A BEAUTIFUL SOFT BRILLIANT POLISH

With the MINIMUM of LABOUR this LIQUID POLISH produces a most brilliant appearance, which lasts much longer than that produced by any other Liquid or Paste Polish. Sold in 1d., 3d., 6d. & 1/- Bottles.

C. CHANCELLOR & CO., LONDON, E.C.

liked the attitude she assumed towards him—an attitude of mute rebellion, yet tacit bending to his will. It was a never-ending source of delight to see the deep eyes turn and droop, to watch them lifted to his in defiance, to feel that he gauged to a nicety her many moods, and played upon each with a master touch. Besides, an added zest was the fact that Delamere was his rival, and he took a sardonic enjoyment in checkmating Jack on every possible occasion. He was wise enough to feel, however, that Vera regarded Delamere with special favour, that he had his own particular place in her life, also that it was quite possible that she would turn to him on occasions when he, personally, would be ignored.

Thus the days waxed and waned, and the season drew to its close. Many times had Rasselas been on the point of declaring his love, but preferred to dally in the sweet uncertainty, the vague excitement, of their meetings, until, as he thought, the supreme moment had come. Besides, he had not yet discovered whether Vera was jealous—a trait in woman that always vastly amused him—and he felt he would like to know how she would act, what she would say, under certain conditions.

Accordingly, he selected the ballroom of a well-known society dame as his place of campaign, and as his experiment, a charming Russian Countess, about whom all men were raving, and who had, on more than one occasion, intimated to Prince Rasselas that his attentions would not be unpleasant. Vera had often noticed the woman, and felt towards her a vague repugnance, which was in no way associated with the stranger's attitude towards the Prince.

Delamere was to accompany the two girls, and, whether it was that she was touched by his ceaseless devotion, his manly acceptance of his fate, his unequalled tact, Vera was somehow very kindly disposed towards her rejected suitor. He looked remarkably handsome, too, and she felt that if she had not met Rasselas, she might one day have consented to lay her hands in those of this tried and trusted friend.

But the "might have been" was slain by the "what was," and as Vera entered the ballroom that night she was conscious that her interest in Rasselas was so great that, were he to ask her love, she would give it without coquetry or dalliance.

She looked quite beautiful, and her dress, from girdle to shoe, was enchanting. In each fair cheek the rare glow showed, while her eyes shone with a brilliance so startling that they would have made even a plain face remarkable.

Delamere felt a thrill of triumph, and yet tempered by uncontrollable anguish, as he walked through the great white room with the woman he loved by his side—triumph that, even for so short a time, he was permitted to be her knight—anguish that she would never be more to him than a dream—a dear dream.

Still, it was something to be permitted to follow in her train, to be of passing service—if only she could have given her sweet self to him in surrender, how he would have cherished and worshipped her. But it was not to be, and though he did not say it, he knew that the world held, would always hold for him, but this one woman.

Rasselas had noticed the entry of Vera instantly; but as he was talking to the little Countess he did not move, but contented himself for the moment with merely bowing.

She looked at him an instant in surprise—felt an unaccountable thrill of anger; then turned to Delamere with an *empressement* so kind and so unusual, that he felt his heart beat madly with unexpected hope.

Meanwhile the music was playing a delicious waltz, and Vera held in her hand the pink programme of which she, on starting, had mentally devoted half to the Prince. Now she was turning the head of Delamere by giving him six dances, instead of the one waltz he really had expected. She set aside two spaces for the name of Rasselas, though when he later on came to ask for them, she accorded him a square dance only, and that well on towards the end of the programme.

The Prince smiled under his moustache as he noticed this sign of feminine pique, but resolved that when his time came he would begin his confession. This intention did not deter him, however, from paying marked attention to the lady whom he had selected as the experiment to test the character of Vera, whose eyes, as she watched the little comedy, grew dark with anger and disgust.

That she should be thus trifled with, thought the girl—she of all people! Ah! it was perhaps a just punishment; she had been too lavish of her favour, too kind to that man, who, with his worldly subtleties and profound knowledge of the workings of a woman's heart, had won her admiration, if nothing else. And to publicly flout her—to ignore her as though she were a little grisette, and to lay his homage at the feet of a painted doll, whose easy conquest was an acknowledged fact. She felt capable of any folly—any sacrifice to show her indifference—her ability to exist without the attentions that had formed hitherto such a disquieting and fascinating element in her life.

And then by one of those freaks that Fate so often plays—one of those unexpected little trifles that unhinge a whole lifetime, Delamere happened to come to her at that moment. And something in the outspoken sympathy of the man's eyes, a sympathy delicate and without pity, made the tears come into her own. "Here is someone who really loves me," she thought. "One who would never neglect or humilate me—one who has been tried by fire and never found wanting." Aye, Rasselas should find that she could exist without his attention, his presence, the honeyed speeches, and insinuating comprehension of her moods! All her maiden pride was up in arms, reason was blinded, and, for the time, the love of Delamere seemed a shield and support, worthy of the utmost consideration.

She laid her hand within his arm, and walked quite silently through the great ballroom on to a balcony, rich with the odour of rare flowers, and the subdued light of many coloured lamps.

"Jack," she said quietly, "do you know why I have brought you here?"

"Because you are tired and sad, dear," he answered gently, "because I am your friend, and would do anything to comfort or serve you."

"I know it, and if you still wish to take care of me—always—I will come to you."

"Vera!"

He took both her hands, and folded them across his breast.

She nodded, and he could see the colour come and go from her beautiful face.

"My God! it's too good to be true!"

He took both her hands, and folded them across his breast.

"I do not know what has made you come to this sudden decision, sweetheart," said he, "but I think I can guess. How I love you, you alone can know; but I do not wish to take a mean advantage of you. If I can be of service you know you may count on me, and if I have the happiness to become your husband, then—oh! I cannot speak of it, my queen—my love!"

Was it that he foresaw there would be many a bitter hour in store for him ere his dream could be realised? Did he instinctively feel that in the Prince he would have an enemy to deal with—stealthy, relentless, and false?

Standing near her in the lamplight, with the knowledge that she was practically his, with the power to caress her in his right, he, nevertheless, did not attempt to seek her lips. An infinite tact and self-denial swayed him—he felt that any such demonstration would sadden and displease her, and so he bravely contented himself by kissing her hands, first the one then the other, and laying his cheek against her silken hair.

But as though even this slight demonstration were too great a proof of her bondage she drew herself away, and, turning upon him her beautiful eyes, said: "Do not think me cruel if I ask you to leave me quite alone for a little while. This place is so secluded that I can rest undisturbed. It is all so new and strange," with a little nervous sob, "that I cannot realise that an evening, a minute even, has so changed my life. Yes, go," as he lingered, "do as I tell you—you may come for me in half-an-hour."

He would have given his fortune to have remained with her in what he instinctively felt was her dark hour. He loved her so passionately that, for the time at least, he would gladly have died to save her pain. But again he realised that submission was the only course, and so, quite simply, he obeyed her.

Lingeringly he left the great balcony, and, before stepping into the room beyond, turned to look at her. She was standing, a gracious vision in white, at the far end, watching him. Was it fancy?—as he lingered she seemed to waft him a little kiss.

Vera, when she found herself alone, took a deep armchair hidden behind a stand of ferns and yielded herself to dreamy thought.

So she had given away her liberty, and had now to look forward to bearing another's name, another's burdens, another's honour. How strange that she, who had started on this night of pleasure a maiden free as air was now bound and fettered. Was she happy? Did she love this good, strong man, whose fearless eyes so ardently bespoke his passion, whose strength was such an admirable foil to her weakness?

To both questions she answered no. She who had dreamed of love as a triumphant, almighty power, who had pictured its agony and delight with marvellous intuition, who appraised to a nicety its torment and unrest, had cast herself into the placid waters of affectionate regard. Though, as ever, she had over all that consciousness of the strength and beauty of her lover's homage—that sense of security and confidence, which in a great battle often triumphs over a more meretricious, if passionate, love.

She probed with profound interest the depths of her soul, and was astonished to find it so calm, so peaceful. Had she done with all the wild longings that had of yore oppressed her. Was she born anew in this hour of surrender? Music, flowers, and dance all seemed as a far away picture, and she was as though cradled upon the bosom of some placid and benign spirit, who drew away from her all troubling images. She closed her eyes. The haunting notes of a waltz rose and fell upon her lulled hearing. The laughter of women and deep voices of men came fitfully through the scented length of the balcony. Tears were near the surface of her eyes. She would almost have been content to die.

She looked surpassingly beautiful. So beautiful that Prince Rasselas, who had discovered her, and was standing before her, felt his pulses leap madly beneath her spell, and the desire to possess her, grip his very soul.

He stood motionless above her until, conscious of his mesmeric glance, she unclosed her eyes and met his.

"Is this the way to treat me?" he softly asked, dragging from its hiding place another chair and placing it near to hers. "Is this the way my friend keeps her promises? Waltz after waltz has been danced, and I have as yet had none with you. But I do not want to dance now that I have found you. I want to talk. I have so much to say, Vera."

She flung out her hand with a little deprecatory gesture. "Vera!" what right had he to call her Vera, now that she had pledged her troth to a good, loyal man. And yet her name as uttered by his lips—how sweet a sound it had.

"Will you not speak to me?" he continued; "will you not say that you are glad to see me?"

"I am glad to see that you have enjoyed yourself," she answered feebly.

His little, enigmatical smile curved his lips. "As I thought," he muttered, "she's jealous."

"Do you really think that I have been enjoying myself?" he again queried. "Did you not guess that I had purposely kept away from you?"

She lifted her eyebrows in ironical scorn.

"Afraid of a woman?" she laughingly questioned. "The hero of a hundred feminine conquests afraid of one poor solitary girl? How delightful it is to experience this astonishment! Really I am in your debt for a new sensation, Prince."

"Mocking me, are you, mademoiselle? Well, I like your mockery—I like your eyes—I like your lips, all—all, I love you, Vera. Oh! my little tigress, show your claws. I don't fear their wounds. Jeer at me with all the delicate irony your delicate tongue can wield, only, love me—love me. Yes, I die of love for you. Yes," he went on, the passion of his words intoxicating him, "I loved you the first time I saw you, I vowed you should be mine. I watched, studied, understood you, *ma reine*—think of it, understood you—and you are coming to me to be yet further read. Oh! you shall have strange hours of joy, mad moments of delight. I will teach you

MRS. LAWRENCE

A Farmer's Wife, writes from Mid-Rasen, Lincolnshire:—"For a long time I suffered severely from

INDIGESTION,

And WIND IN THE STOMACH, and had to call in the doctor. Having prescribed for me some time he said, 'I can do nothing more for you.' My husband urged me to try your WIND PILLS; I took them and in a few days was quite well and able to get up, and now enjoy excellent health. Publish my name and address."

PAGE WOODCOCK'S WIND PILLS

Are Invaluable to all Sufferers from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND on the STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION of the HEART, &c., should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

All Chemists, 1/1½ and 2/9. Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, LINCOLN.

DIRECT FROM THE PATENTEE AND SOLE MANUFACTURER TO THE CUSTOMER AT WHOLESALE PRICES.

THE WONDERFUL ORCHESTRAL ORGANETTE.

SPECIAL OFFER—A FOUR GUINEA ORGANETTE FOR 35/-

3 STOPS

By Royal Letters Patent

A MERE CHILD CAN PLAY IT.

Size, 14½ in. long, 13½ in. wide, 9½ in. high, weighs 8lbs.

The very **ACME OF MUSICAL INVENTION**, an instrument with as much variety of tone as a £25 organ. Every Orchestral Organette has **28 FULL-SIZE AMERICAN ORGAN REEDS**, controlled by **THREE STOPS**, viz: Flute, Expression, and Vox Humana, furnishing the **GRANDEST ORCHESTRAL EFFECTS. THE RANGE OF MUSIC AND TONE IS PRACTICALLY UNLIMITED.** For **HOME ENTERTAINMENTS THEY ARE UNSURPASSED.** We **REFUND THE MONEY AND PAY CARRIAGE** to anyone not entirely satisfied after receiving it. Any tune can be played with artistic effect by anyone, young or old. We will give a selection of **MUSIC FREE** with each Instrument. Send money by Registered Letter, Crossed Cheque, or Money Order. For 2s. extra the Organette will be sent carriage paid.

J. M. DRAPER, ORGANETTE WORKS, BLACKBURN.

EASY PAYMENTS.

We have decided to sell a limited number on following easy payments: 10s. deposit and 5s. monthly. Price 40s. Full particulars on application

For Coughs

BRONCHONIA

Bronchonia is Unrivalled as a Cure for all **COUGHS**, whether arising from Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma, or Throat Irritation. **Its Efficacy is testified to by Eminent Physicians.**

IS A MARVELLOUS REMEDY.

ONE TRIAL WILL PROVE ITS EFFICACY.

Of all Chemists, **2s. 6d., 4s. 6d.,** and **11s.** per bottle. Post free, **2s 9d., 4s. 9d.,** and **11s. 6d.**—**J. HOWARD & Co., 20 and 21, QUEENHITHE, LONDON, E.C.**

PILLS HOLLOWAY'S & OINTMENT

ARE HOUSEHOLD NECESSITIES, AND NO HOME IS COMPLETE WITHOUT THEM.

THE PILLS

CURE HEADACHE, INDIGESTION, BILIOUSNESS, HEARTBURN, GIDDINESS, NAUSEA, PALPITATION,

AND ALL COMPLAINTS OF THE LIVER AND STOMACH.

THE OINTMENT

CURES STIFF JOINTS, SPRAINS, CUTS, BRUISES, SORES, OLD WOUNDS, BURNS, SCALDS, ECZEMA, &c.

Manufactured only at 78, NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON.

SOLD BY ALL CHEMISTS AND MEDICINE VENDORS.

GIVEN AWAY £5,000! GIVEN AWAY £5,000!

GRAHAM & CO.'S MONSTER XMAS GIFT.

Special Gift to our Patrons. For this XMAS ONLY. This Advertisement will NOT APPEAR AGAIN.

We intend to give away 5,000 watches only. The first 5,000 applications received will get them. The rest will have their money returned in full. Immediately you read this send 13s. Postal Order, and you will secure this wonderful and useful gift: A Lady's or Gent's Watch sold by us at 21s. Why we do this: Because we wish to introduce our Jewellery to you and your friends' notice. You will look at our Catalogue and send us more orders.

FOR THE SMALL SUM OF 12/6 WE WILL SEND AS FOLLOWS:

One Gent's Egyptian Gold Albert, or one Lady's Egyptian Gold Albert	our price	2s. 6d.
One Seal or Locket for Chain	our price	1s. 6d.
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Ring, or one Lady's 5-Stone Diamond Ring	our price	3s. 6d.
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Scarfpin, or one Lady's Fashionable Brooch	our price	2s. 6d.
One Pair of Cuff Links, or one Carbon Diamond Bracelet...	our price	2s. 6d.
And one Set of Diamond or Egyptian Gold Studs	our price	3s. 6d
Total		16s. 0d.

FOR **12/6**

In addition to above Every Purchaser will be presented Free of Charge with one of our handsome Lady's or Gentleman's

KEYLESS WATCHES.

Usually sold at 21s. Warranted to keep Correct Time.

Read what is said by those who have purchased. You may inspect the originals at our depot. Remember, these Testimonials are unsolicited. We have thousands more like them.

COULD NOT GET BETTER FOR £20.

"High Street, Sowston, Cambs., April 13th, 1896.

"DEAR SIRS,—I thought I would write a few lines to you in recommendation of your presentation Keyless Watch I had two years ago the 9th of last December. It has been a splendid timekeeper, and is going well now. It has been the talk of the village. If I had given £20 for one it could not have kept better time. I have done the best I could for you in recommending your articles. This is not a make-up, it is the truth.—Believe me, yours sincerely, "Mr. F. W. EVERARD."

EQUAL TO A FIVE-GUINEA WATCH.

"Rose Cottage, Hammerwood, near East Grinstead, May 5th, 1896.

"DEAR SIRS,—I received the jewellery and watch on Saturday, and I am delighted with it all. The watch, I am sure, is worth the money. It keeps time well with my five guinea watch. I shall take care of your catalogue, so that when I want anything else I can send to you.—Yours, "ROBERT A. STEWART."

GOES BETTER THAN HIS £15 WATCH.

"11, North Street, St. Peter's, Tunbridge Wells.

"GENTLEMEN,—Some weeks ago I sent to your firm for the jewellery and advertised watch, of which I am surprised; the *Watch* is a beautiful timeist. I must admit, in fact, it goes better than my £15 gold watch; and for the jewellery it is astonishing value. I think you must lose money over such gifts, as I term it. The watch alone is worth double the money I inclosed. I have shown it to several of my friends, and they were astonished. You can add this to your testimonials if it will be of any service.—I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully, "LEWIS C. RHODES."

THREE YEARS AGO.

"Coed-Howel-Isa, Glasinfryn, Bangor, N. Wales, June 10th, 1896.

"DEAR SIRS,—I am inclosing a P.O. hereon for one of your Gent's Single Stone Claw Rings as advertised in the P.I.P. I should also be very pleased if you will kindly show me the favour of sending a catalogue as well, as I intend to get something better shortly. About three years back I had a watch from you, and if I remember rightly 21/6 was the price. I am glad to say it has given me every satisfaction, and has never been cleaned, nor in a jeweller's shop. It keeps as good time as a gold one that cost £20 in a London firm. The size required is inclosed.—I am, dear Sirs, yours most truly, "J. JONES."

GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

WANTS A SECOND PARCEL.

"Lowick-by-Beale, Northumberland, August 17th.

"GENTLEMEN,—Received to-day your second parcel of jewellery, with which we are immensely pleased. We really wonder how you can do it. The watch itself is worth more than the money charged for the whole. Many thanks for punctuality.—Very truly yours, "WILLIAM McISAAC."

ALL THE WAY FROM ARABIA.

"Steamer Point, Aden, Arabia, June 3rd, 1896.

"SIRS,—I received the parcel quite safe, and I was very pleased with the same, especially with the two rings; they are, no doubt, beautiful. My friends were astonished when I told them the small price I gave for each. I will positively send you another order in a month or so (before we leave Aden). Be sure I will recommend your firm to all my friends. Thank you very much for your promptness in sending the same.—Believe me, yours truly, "M. BRADLEY."

WILL RECOMMEND HIS FRIENDS.

"Salamanca Barracks, Aldershot, August 5th, 1896.

"GENTLEMEN,—I am very sorry that I was unable to send acknowledgment of receipt of rings sent to me, as I have been away over a week. I must thank you for your very prompt reply. I am more than pleased with the rings; they far surpass anything I have seen for the amount charged for them. I will do my utmost in recommending your goods to my friends. I also thank you for the catalogue you sent, and which I shall show to my friends. I shall shortly favour you with another order, and anything I require in the form of jewellery I shall order it off you.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, "Private W. B. HODKINSON."

FROM THE WEST INDIES.

"234, Tower Street, Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies, June 8th, 1896.

"To Messrs. Graham and Co., London.—GENTLEMEN,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of a lady's watch from your establishment. It is now twenty-eight days in use, and I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to its good qualities. In appearance it is equal to 18-carat gold, and, as a time-keeper, superior to an 'English silver lever,' which cost me seven guineas. As a work of art beauty, it is simply 'perfection.' And the great wonder is, 'how any firm can afford to turn out such a good article at the very low price'—12s. 6d.'—I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant, "J. THOMPSON."

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a CORRECT TIMEKEEPER. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. If you cannot call, get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in rotation. MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.

NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 12s. 6d. (post free registered 13s.). Foreign Stamps *not accepted*. Postage out of Great Britain 1s. 6d. extra. Each customer will receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the **12/6 MONSTER PRESENTATION PARCEL** including the **HANDSOME KEYLESS WATCH.**

E. GRAHAM & CO., WHOLESALE JEWELLERS, 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

all the secrets of life and art—and we shall live—live every minute of our lives, for I am rich, and gold can buy all the treasures of the world, though I know it cannot buy a woman's love. Oh! answer me, you pale and dainty child—say: 'Rasselas, I am yours.'"

She lay so still and quiet that one might have thought her dead. The storm of his words had beaten upon her thirsty heart like rain upon a parched desert—and she knew that though she adored him, he spoke too late. All the mad infatuation she had for him surged anew in her heart, and she felt that she could have died at his feet and been happy.

Nevertheless, she had the strength of self-control. Her long lashes parted, and, turning upon him the full anguish and splendour of her grey eyes, she said in tones low, but very firm:

"You come an hour too late. I have promised to marry Delamere."

"My God—but you shall not—you are mine—body, soul, and heart. Do you think I would give you to that man, who reads you only with blinded eyes? Do you think that, having tasted the sweetness of your presence, I should be content to live without you? You were mine in another sphere, mine the moment I saw you—mine now and for ever!"

"Ah, mercy—have mercy!"

"Mercy? I? You ask for what I have not. You must come with me to-night—to-morrow. That other promise is as nothing before my love, my prior claim. Break it; fling it aside and come to me. If you fear—this—your *fiancé*, none need know of your flight. By to-morrow I could arrange everything. We could catch the boat express, cross over to the Continent, and there—ah, you could become my wife, and we would lead an existence so enchanted that, were heaven offered to your view, you would cling to earth—to earth only. Say 'Yes,' darling. My rose, my love, my queen!"

She did not even seek to fight against the power and seduction of his words. Her promise, uttered so short a time ago, paled into nothingness before this scorching, feverish voice. Life with him? Yes, it would be indeed an enchantment, and she would sacrifice everything, save honour, to be his wife. His wife! Delicious word!

Rasselas, with his experienced eye, read that the battle was gained. He saw it in the tremulous lips, the shadowed eyes, the drooping pose. His study of women had not been profitless, and he knew that often the conquest of one, proud, and unused to love's arts, is more easy of accomplishment than that of the lightest of coquettes. Not that he did not mean well by her—she was the only woman he had ever desired as wife, and in that future capacity he must be careful that no breath of scandal should touch her.

With a mad, exultant cry he pressed her to his breast He crushed her slender waist in the fierceness of his triumph. He kissed her hair, her eyes, her lips; and she, just because she could not act, and because she was a true woman, wound her slender arms around his throat, and murmured: "I love you; indeed I love you."

Dimly burnt the lights, sweetly bloomed the flowers, dreamily played the music. In those kisses Vera recognised the woman she could be—and in the future, could never be again.

And while they sat and talked in low delicious whispers, they planned and spoke of the future. Carefully and clearly Rasselas told her what to do, where they should meet, and how to escape without awakening suspicion. His knowledge was so varied, so supreme, that he left no detail unmentioned, and had Vera been more experienced she would have recognised in this glibness the master hand in the art of intrigue.

Upon the tide of his eloquence she was swept along; beneath the irresistible fascination of the man she was powerless; and the old fanatic nature reasserted itself within her, and she became once more the girl of the convent, whose emotions mastered her, whose dream of love consisted of blind allegiance, absolute surrender.

When they bade each other good-night, her loveliness was so entrancing that Rasselas was positively dazzled. Aye, was she not a woman to possess, for whom he would storm the very gates of Hell? Bah! of what use to fear the past! Only H—— knew it and one other woman—and she was perhaps dead. Besides, he would dash the glove of defiance into the face of the most gruesome phantom—that grim land peopled with ghosts of what was! This girl was his by right of their mutual understanding—and nothing should wrest her from him.

So next day Vera received a short epistle from him, putting in the most concise way the plan of their meeting; and all during that morn she was busily packing her trinkets and a few things she would absolutely need She never thought of discovery. It was characteristic of her to fight boldly. With wonderful *sang froid* she met and spoke to people; but, had anyone closely observed her, they would have noted how brilliant were her eyes, how concentrated her voice; because through all this mad excitement and apparent *sang froid*, there nevertheless beat in her heart a great regret that she was forced to deceive the father, who, in his strange way, loved her so dearly, and had spoiled her so generously.

She thought of the thousand kindnesses he had shown her, the great pride he had taken in all that concerned her, and, above all, the entire trust and liberty he had given her. And she was about to abuse this liberty, and dash his trust to the ground. If only she had not given her word to Delamere, if only she had not been so hasty in accepting him, if only she could have gone boldly before the world and said: "Rasselas is my lover—him alone will I marry!"

And so she was particularly loving to her father and Hélène these passing hours, though on the plea of indisposition she absolutely refused to see Delamere. She could not have faced the loyal homage of his eyes, the deep passion of his words, the reverential gladness of his triumph. Now on the verge of the wrong she was about to do him, all the nobility of his character seemed to be unveiled, and the absolute rest with which he always inspired her as something to be infinitely regretted. He was so worthy of love—and she was about to wound that love to death.

The time sped by restlessly and almost too quickly, and the hour of departure arrived. With fatal facility this departure was accomplished; for Fate has sometimes a humourous delight in playing into the hands of those who call upon her. A smart hansom soon brought her to the station where the boat train was waiting with its huge cargo of passengers. She was to meet Rasselas near a certain door, where he would be ready with her ticket, for she was to get into one compartment, he into another.

She went unwaveringly to the place of rendezvous.

He was not there.

Not there ——! He, who had vowed in words burning and poetic that he would be waiting, longing, and praying, for her arrival. He had failed her!

And she, Vera Darrell—one of society's greatest ladies—had laid down her pride in vain. Oh, intolerable humiliation!

In this moment her soul cried out for Delamere, the true, the honest, the brave. But she had forfeited her home and old friends, and, alas, most bitter thought of all—her own self-respect.

For she never thought of returning. Sooner would she have thought of throwing herself beneath the wheels of the train. What could she do?—where to go?

And then suddenly the far-away voice of the nuns of the Sacred Heart seemed to rise and call her. "If ever you are in trouble, my child, remember that the gate of the convent is always opened wide."

How she had jested with Rasselas in the past about that exhortation! How she had laughed over it with Hélène, and how these fervent words seemed to come as a great balm to her outraged heart! And it was the man who had so cynically discussed this "Convent Call" that was the means of drawing her to accept it. How well she remembered his *badinage*, how clearly she recalled that afternoon when he had wound some bandages around her delicate face, and fastened an impromptu hood in imitation of their dress. Perhaps she would soon wear that sombre garb in terrible earnestness. And already she seemed to be bidding adieu to life and youth and love.

But she must bestir herself—she would have to get her ticket and obtain all necessary information, and less than ten minutes was all the time that remained.

A friendly guard saw her safely ensconced in a corner of a first-class carriage that, fortunately, was available, and he thought he had never seen so distressed and lovely a face. He gave her every instruction where to change and what to do, and informed her that the little village of W—— was but half-an-hour's train journey from Brussels. "You'll be all right, Miss," he comfortably assured her, pocketing her liberal *pourboire*, "never you mind—there's plenty as will 'elp you."

Ah! there was the whistle! Then they were really going. In an agony of uncertainty she leant from the carriage, hoping against hope for a sight of her laggard lover. He might be there after all.

But not a sign of the form she would have known among a thousand, and with a half sob she fell back against the cushions, and, as the engine steamed out of the station, thought that never was there a woman so flouted, so humiliated as she.

Meanwhile, Rasselas had been the sport of one of Fate's malicious caprices. To do him justice, it must be said that he had started to meet Vera in ample time, nay, had started with heart aflame and greater longing than ever. Had all gone well, he would have been at the rendezvous a good half-hour before the stated time. But by some ill luck his hansom overturned, and he narrowly escaped being killed. As it was, he had to be taken to the nearest shop to recover, if only slightly, from the severe shaking and bruising he had received. With a great effort, and considerable physical pain, he had managed to pull himself together, and by the shop's clock to allow himself a slight margin to reach, in good time, the station.

But the shop's clock was wrong, and he arrived at the station only to find that the train had been gone four minutes.

He reviled his luck; he searched in room and doorway and nook for a sign of his beloved; but nowhere was she to be seen. From porter to porter he passed with a description of Vera—none had seen her. At last one man, with a good-natured face, came up during a discussion, and, after listening attentively, volunteered that he had put a lady into the train who answered exactly to the description, and that she seemed "mighty" distressed and perplexed. He "saw she was bound for Brussels, sor, and I 'elped 'er as best I could with any information she required, and she arsted me perticulars about a village some miles from Brussels, which, strange to say, I knew of, as my brother's a guard on that there line. She seemed awful upset, did that there lady—I never seed a face so purty and white."

Where had she gone? What wild folly was she about to commit? There was no possible means of following her that night; he would have to calm his ardour till next morning, when he would start off in hot pursuit of his dainty love.

And with one of those instinctive flashes that at times bless our intelligence, he became absolutely certain that in her rush of wounded pride she had gone to seek refuge at the old convent school. Had she not said so many times in the past, that if she were in trouble or distress she would seek that school-girl abode? Was she not of that finely tempered organisation that in the enthusiasm of her rage she would be capable of any folly? Yes, he saw it all; and in spite of bars, bolts, nuns, and prejudice, he would carry her off triumphantly as the Vikings of old carried off their loved ones in face of storm and tempest.

CHAPTER V.

LIKE a heavy dream the journey passed for Vera. The rushing whirl of the train buzzed and beat through her brain like a cruel hammer. The trip on board the steamer was fraught with equal discomfort, and how she found her way from Brussels to the village of W—— would be a mystery to her till her dying day.

As she put foot on the familiar spot, her jaded glance became filled with wonderment. Was it possible that in this little, cramped corner of God's earth she had laughed, sang, dreamed, and been happy?

Tremblingly she rang the bell.

The narrow primitive village looked like a toy picture, and she thought with a shudder how awful a fate to be buried here, away from the din and splendour of London—away from the excitement and glamour of her existence—away from all love save that of One above.

She took the old road that led to the great grey convent, pausing now and again to look at the toil-bent figure of a Flemish peasant, and to mechanically smile at the sight of the carts with their leash of patient, sad-eyed dogs. Nothing had changed—the same old fields — the same tiny rivulets filled with croaking frogs — the same shrines, the same flowers.

And yet who knew what change had taken place within the convent gates? Might not Mère Felise be sleeping her last long sleep, and might not another Superior be in the place of Mère Marie Dolorosa? Perhaps they would refuse to admit her—they feared aught that shadowed of the world and its vanities, did these holy sisters.

At last she reached the huge iron portals. Tremblingly she rang the bell, which was speedily answered by an old sister, who, save that she had more wrinkles and that her form was more bent, Vera recognised with joy was the hall porteress of bygone days.

"Is Mère Marie Dolorosa within? Is Mère Marie Felise still alive?" she questioned with beating heart. "If so tell them that Vera Darrell is here and wants to see them."

"You, *mon enfant!*" was the astonished reply. "How the garden of the world develops its flowers! Mère Marie Dolorosa is, I regret, no more. She sleeps yonder in the shadow of the cross. But our dear Superior, Mère Marie Felise, is, thanks be to Mary, alive and well and most beloved. Enter, *mon enfant*: she will no doubt welcome you, for you were always one of her best loved children."

With a little sob of joy and relief Vera stepped within the clean white parlour, wherein all guests were received, and with anxious eyes watched for the entry of the woman she had, in bygone years, respected and worshipped so much.

Ah! there was the rustle of her gown, the clink of her rosary, and in another

LONG HAS SHE REIGNED.

Now that QUEEN VICTORIA has reigned longer than any other Monarch, every loyal subject will recognise that the most appropriate piece of jewellery for present wear as an emblem of loyalty is

The QUEEN'S COMMEMORATION BROOCH

Designed and Patented by the designer of the Queen's Jubilee Brooch.

EVERY BRITON'S NEW YEAR GIFTS SHOULD INCLUDE THE COMMEMORATION BROOCH OF ENGLAND'S GREATEST QUEEN.

ONLY OF THE DESIGNER—

J. N. MASTERS, RYE, SUSSEX.

"I USED IT."

MOUSTACHES,

HEAVY AND HANDSOME, SPEEDILY PRODUCED.

BALD PATCHES ERADICATED

BY USING

"ESAULINE."

Testimonials daily. POST FREE in British Isles, **1/6, 3 -,** and **5 -,** from

A. KNOWLES & Co., 30, Newgate Street, E.C.

ROBINSON & CLEAVER, Belfast,

And 170, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.

IRISH CAMBRIC Children's Bordered, per doz. 1s. 3d.
Ladies' ... ... ,, 2s. 3d.
Gents' ... ... ,, 3s. 3d.

HEMSTITCHED.
Ladies' ... ... per doz. 2s. 9d.
Gents' ... ... ,, 3s. 11d.

SAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATED PRICE LISTS POST FREE.

POCKET HANDKERCHIEFS.

IRISH DAMASK TABLE LINEN. Fish Napkins, 2s. 11d. per dozen. Dinner Napkins, 5s. 6d. per dozen. Table Cloths, 2yd. square, 2s. 11d., 2½yd. by 3yd., 1s. 11d. each. Kitchen Table Cloths, 11½d. each. Strong Huckaback Towels, 4s. 6d. per dozen. Frilled Linen Pillow Cases from 1s. 4½d. each.

(By special appointments to the Queen and the Empress Frederick of Germany.)

N B.—To prevent delay all Letter Orders and Enquiries for Samples should be sent direct to Belfast.

PROVED BY 100 YEARS' USE.

Dr. ROBERTS'

POOR MAN'S FRIEND OINTMENT

HEALS QUICKLY and GIVES IMMEDIATE RELIEF.

For ***SKIN DISEASES.***

Of all Chemists, 1/1½ and 2/9. Made only by

BEACH & BARNICOTT, Ld., BRIDPORT

DO NOT BUY JEWELLERY

19/- **AT A SHOP.**

Send to our WHOLESALE WAREHOUSE for our **SPLENDID CATALOGUE** containing 1,500 Engravings of every description of WATCHES AND JEWELLERY at **WHOLESALE PRICES.** Rings, Pins, Brooches, Bracelets, Chains, Electro-Plate, and Cutlery much below shop prices. The **"KNOCKABOUT" WATCH,** 7s., very good. The **"CHAMPION" CLUB WATCH,** cannot and few lied, 30s. **REAL ENGLISH LEVER,** extraordinary price, 40s. **SILVER WALTHAM LEVERS,** 35s. All post free.

The **"EXCELSIOR" SILVER WATCH,** 19s., marvellously good, reliable, durable, cheap. Compare it with those advertised as worth £3. It is a king.

A MONTH'S FREE TRIAL WITH WATCHES. All Money returned if not approved. NO OLD-FASHIONED EXTRAVAGANT PRICES.

WATCH CLUBS.—Managers who have had experience of the inferior goods usually considered good enough for Watch Clubs by other firms, should apply for particulars.

G. LANGDON DAVIS & CO.,

123 & 125, Bristol Street, Birmingham.

BEST SHEFFIELD MAKE. GERMAN HOLLOW GROUND.

KROPP RAZOR

ALWAYS READY FOR USE

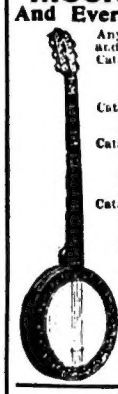
NEVER REQUIRES GRINDING.

Black Handle - -	**5s. 6d.**	A pair Ivory Handles, in Russia Leather Case -	**21s.**
Ivory Handle - -	**7s. 6d.**	Kropp's Duplex Strop	**7s. 6d.**
		Kropp's Strop Paste -	**6d.**

FROM ALL PERFUMERS AND DEALERS. *Wholesale:* OSBORNE, GARRETT & Co., LONDON, W.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

And Everything in the Musical Line.



Any of the following Catalogs can be had for the asking and will cost you nothing.

Catalog A—For Violins, Cellos, Basses, Cornets, Saxhorns, Trombones, Clarionettes, Oboes, Flutes, Piccolos, Drums, Music Stands, Strings, Fittings, and all Band accessories.

Catalog B—For Banjos, Zither Banjos, Banjeurines, Resonators, Mandolines, Guitars, Autoharps, Zithers, Strings and Fittings.

Catalog C—For Musical Boxes, from 1s. 6d. to £100. Special Boxes, with interchangeable cylinders, double springs, tune skipper and indicator, speed regulator, silent winder, and all latest improvements.

Catalog D—For Mignon Mechanical Organs, Phœnix, Ariosa, Celestina, Intonia, Heilkons, Symphoniums, Melodeons, German and Anglo Concertinas, Musical Albums, Nigger Bones, Wigs, Collars, Cuffs, Fronts, Black, &c., Tambourines, Sleigh Bells, Chimes, Ocarinas, Fairy Bells, Mouth Harmonicas, Toy Symphonies, Kazoos, Japanese Fiddles, Autoharps, and all accessories. Part I. Pianofortes; Part II. American Organs and Harmoniums.

JOSEPH RILEY & SONS

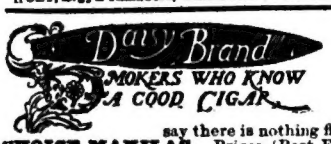
ON CONSTITUTION HILL, BIRMINGHAM,

Best and Cheapest House in Kingdom.

Thousands of Customers say so.

BLUSHING

Permanently Cured.—A Pamphlet giving sound, practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped envelope.—PROF. E. B. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

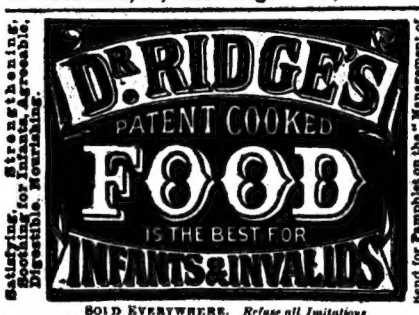


say there is nothing finer than these **CHOICE MANILAS.** Prices (Post Free on receipt of remittance), **17s. to 30s. per 100.** Boxes of 12 Samples, **2s. 6d.**; or 5 Samples of each of 5 of the Best Kinds (25 in all), **5s.**

TURKISH CIGARETTES.—A specially fine quality (the best that money can buy) always in Stock. Prices, **2s. 6d.** and **3s.** per box of **50.** (Two sizes same quality.)

Samples Free on receipt of addressed stamped Envelope.

W. H. ELLIS, 65, West Regent St., GLASGOW.



SOLD EVERYWHERE. *Refuse all Imitations*

Exquisite Models. Perfect Fit. Guaranteed Wear.

THE Y & N

PATENT DIAGONAL SEAM CORSETS

Will not split in the Seams nor tear in the Fabric.

Made in White, Black, and all the Fashionable Colours and Shades, in Italian Cloth, Satin, and Coutil; also in the new Sanitary Woollen Cloth.

4/11, 5/11, 6/11, 7/11

PER PAIR AND UPWARDS.

THREE GOLD MEDALS.

Sold by all Drapers and Ladies' Outfitters.

WHY SUFFER FROM CORNS, BUNIONS, OR ENLARGED TOE JOINTS, when a packet of **Thompson's Celebrated French Corn Plasters** will cure you? It is thin as silk, and can be worn with tightest boot. Post free for 14 stamps from M. F. THOMPSON, Homœopathic Chemist, 17, Gordon St., Glasgow. *Thompson's Guide to Health* post free

"The Delicious Essence of the Violet itself"

THE CROWN PERFUMERY Co

177, NEW BOND ST, LONDON, W.

SOLE MAKERS OF

THE DELICIOUS PERFUME

CRAB-APPLE BLOSSOMS

AND THE WORLD-RENOWNED

CROWN LAVENDER SALTS.

THOMSON'S CORSET.

"GLOVE FITTING," "LONG WAISTED."

PERFECTION!! SOLD BY ALL DRAPERS.

ONE MILLION PAIRS ANNUALLY.

D 10/6 | F 6/6
E 8/6 | G 5/-

BLACK 1/- EXTRA.

Approved by the whole polite world.

TWELVE PRIZE MEDALS.

If your Draper cannot supply you, write direct to 112, Fore Street, London, E.C., giving size, and inclosing P.O.O., and the Corset will at once be sent you. W. S. THOMSON & CO. Ltd., Manufacturers.

MADE IN LENGTHS 13, 14 & 15 inch.

These World Renowned Corsets have a reputation of over 35 years, present sale larger than ever. Genuine article cheaper than imitations; every Corset clearly marked "THOMSON'S GLOVE-FITTING."

CORSETS FOR THE MILLION.

Ask for Thomson's "CLOCK-SPRING," any colour at 3/6.

30 YEARS' SUCCESS among the DEAF.

REV. E. J. SILVERTON, Specialist, of Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London, will be happy to send his book on the Ear, "How to Cure without the Use of Instruments or Operation." Price 6d. Sufferers from Deafness, Noises, or Discharges in the Ear should obtain this work, or write or call at the Consulting Rooms. Free Consultations daily, 11 to 4. (Saturdays, 11 to 1.) Wonderful cases: A person cured after 40 years' deafness, and one at the age of 90. A gentleman after 17 years' deafness cured. A remarkable case of a lady at Lincoln substantiated by a Clergyman. Addresses on application. All communications as above.

PATRONISED by ROYALTY.

5,000 SILK UMBRELLAS at 2/6 each.

DIRECT FROM THE MANUFACTURER.

THE

"PARKER" UMBRELLA,

REGISTERED.

Ladies' and Gents' Plain or Twilled Silk (Parker's Hollow Ribbed Frames), carved & mounted sticks, Sent Parcel Post Free 2/9, or 36 stamps. List and Testimonials free. Re-covering neatly done, plain or twilled silk, Ladies' or Gents', 2/6 each. Returned next post.

J. B. PARKER.

Umbrella Works, BROOM CLOSE, SHEFFIELD

BLACKBURN'S CURRANT COUGH ELIXIR.

The CHRISTIAN UNION says: "Blackburn's Currant Cough Elixir is unquestionably a sovereign remedy for Bronchitis, Coughs, Colds, and Hoarseness."

For Sixty Years extensively used by all classes of society, and universally acknowledged to be the best remedy ever offered to the World.

In bottles, 13½d., 2s. 3d., and 4s. 6d. each, of Chemists, or sent post free on receipt of stamps by the Proprietor,

S. BLACKBURN, Chemist, 26, TYRREL STREET, BRADFORD.

'KAL' KNICKERS

Ref.

SUPERSEDING PETTICOATS

For Cycling or Ordinary wear.

Acknowledged the Best Knickerbockers for Ladies. Give a neat figure and comfort in all weathers. Well made in 12 different materials. Price List Free or Sample pair **3 11** Post Free. (State size corset worn and height.)

DEVON 'KALS' FACTORY 49, EMMA PLACE, PLYMOUTH.

Makers to H.M. THE QUEEN and H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

NIXEY'S LEAD

Still the very best in existence for

STOVES & GRATES.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address, Mrs. B. C. WOOD, 4, Duke Street, Villiers Street, London, W.

£20

TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING. See 11th Guide and Catalogue (259 pages), 3d., "How to Open a Cigar Store, £20 to £2,000." Tobacconists' Outfitting Co (Reg.), 186, Euston Road, London.—N.B.—The largest and original House. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. Myers.

Send 4 Stamps and receive pair

FOLDING SCISSORS, PATENT PENKNIFE,

and Amusing Novelty Catalogue, post paid.

VARIETY COMPANY, DALSTON, LONDON.

RED NOSES

Prescription of eminent physician for a speedy simple home cure. Effectual. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to **Dr. A. P. CURTIS,** York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

BLUSHING.

Particulars of a self-treatment for a permanent cure, as prescribed by eminent physicians of the U.S.A., forwarded free to all sufferers on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. N. FIELD, 15, York Buildings, Charing Cross, London, W.

HAIR DESTROYED.

On receipt of stamped addressed envelope a lady will send to those afflicted with Superfluous Hairs, free particulars of a simple remedy which permanently removed a large growth from her sister's face without injuring the skin. Address in confidence—

Miss E. P. DALE, 26, Belvedere Rd., Lambeth, Lond.

instant the wan, sweet face, the grey eyes of Mère Felise were looking piercingly into her own.

"Vera! dear child, have you come to your old home?"

Without a word Vera dropped her head forward on the bosom of her friend, and, sobbing, uttered: "Ah! take me in—I am most unhappy, deceived, forsaken!"

"Hush, hush!" said the soothing voice, "tell me all about it, dear—I can feel for you, I shall understand."

"I know it, and that is why I am here. Do you remember the night I came to your room nearly five years ago, when you said that love was an exceedingly sweet or an exceedingly bitter fruit? You told me, too, that when my sorrowful hour came to me I was to think of you—of the Calvary in the garden. And, oh! I have tasted of love and found it bitter—my sorrowful hour has come and I turn to you. Don't, don't send me from you!"

"No, dear, no; you shall not leave me until you are comforted and at rest. Come to my little room, childie, and as of old tell me your troubles."

Gently she took the hand of Vera, and together they entered the cell made holy by her presence.

And in the solitude and sanctity of that chamber Vera bared her heart.

It was with a face calmly beautiful that Vera knelt that evening within the lovely convent chapel. The *cantiques* seemed like angels' voices to her tired ears; and the *vox humana* of the organ was as the voice of God to her aching heart.

In long rows of benches knelt the hundred, uniformed girls as of yore. By the side of each bench knelt a pale-faced nun, and before God's altar the familiar form of the priest swinging his censor in adoration and chanting in melodious cadence, homage to the Most High. In the niche by the side of the altar stood the same statue of the Bleeding Heart, with its white sculptured hand pointed to the sculptured drops of blood. On the right was the figure of sweet Mother Mary, with her immaculate smile and changeless, holy eyes.

All was the same—the old monotony, the old peace. She, and she alone, was changed; for she had eaten of the Tree of Life.

The next day passed uneventfully, but the day after, as she was sitting with Mère Felise, stroking the gentle hand of her favourite mother and listening with eagerness to her soothing voice, the hall porteress knocked at the door and informed them that a "Monsieur" was in the parlour asking for Mademoiselle Darrell.

Vera grew white to the lips.

"He has guessed—he has found me! Ah! come with me, mother!"

"My child, did I not say that perhaps you had judged him too rashly? Did I not point out to you that many things might have happened to prevent his meeting you at that particular hour? A train, even as a tide, will wait for no man, and your condemnation of your lover was perhaps a little too rash and premature. Go to him alone, dear, and I will follow later. Be good, be forgiving, be just. Do not fling your happiness aside without reason. Think of those who, through circumstances, are forced to renounce their very all, and rejoice that an opportunity is afforded you to pick up the broken thread."

"I love him, I think I love him still," murmured Vera, and with trembling fingers she began to smooth her disordered hair, and make herself comely for the eyes of her dear.

Down the long corridor she sped, and when on the threshold of the room where he was awaiting her, her hand could scarcely turn the handle, so deep was her agitation.

"Rasselas, oh! Rasselas," she cried, when before him.

"I was right. I have found you, my love, my bride!"

Together they sat on the little hard sofa of the convent parlour, and with her head on his shoulder she told him of her desperate flight and sorrow; while he, with kisses on her eyes and hair, made known to her the cause of his delay and wild alarm at finding she had gone.

"Rasselas, hear me, by the holy sign of this Cross!"

For once in his life he added no lie; for this hour, at least, he honestly loved and forgot himself in his passion for the girl at his side.

Never before had the four bare walls of this bare, clean room listened to vows so burning, laughter so shy. To the enchanted eyes of Vera, the world was a flowery Paradise as the serpent of Doubt lay slain; to the enamoured heart of Rasselas, existence and love were opening for him a hitherto unknown book.

Ah! the joy of living—this madness of love!

And while they laughed and kissed, the *frou-frou* of skirts, the clink of rosary was again audible.

"May I come in?" tapped Mère Felise.

Rasselas sprang erect at the nun's entry.

Then, as though the ghost of long ago was looking at him with reproachful eyes, he uttered but one word: "Gertrude!"

And a cry of anguish answered him: "Maurice! Maurice!"

Vera, as she heard, sat transfixed. From whence, from whom came the sound of those voices—the keynote of one, that of surprise and rage, that of the other, a lifetime agony! Who was this woman with the pale bandaged face? this woman in whose eyes the God of Heaven had momentarily died, and the love of man so brightly burned?

And her lover, he—what had he to do with this cloistered nun? What madness was this creeping over her senses? What horror of revelation was holding her in cruel force?

"Oh! what is it?—tell me, both of you!" she intreated, wringing her hands. "Why do you look at each other so strangely? Mother, what do you know of my lover, my future husband?"

"Only this—that he was mine before you ever dreamed of love, darling, and that another had a yet greater claim than I once had—his wife!"

"His wife!" echoed Vera dully; "his wife! Serge, say that this is untrue—you were never married? Ah! God, you *are* not married."

A curious gleam crept into the eyes of Serge Rasselas. "Little one, I was once married—but—but my wife is dead!"

"That is false!" broke in Mère Felise. "God tells me this is false. Maurice Lyle—or Serge Rasselas—you shall not break this child's life as you once broke my own. You shall not drag her into shame and ignominy. You shall not deceive her as you once deceived me. Vera," turning to the girl, "my little darling child, you must be brave, you must not build your happiness on the wreck of another's. My sorrow, my suffering, are of no account. For an instant, yes, all that might have been rose in its sadness to taunt me, but I am myself once more, intent only on your good. Rasselas, hear me, by the holy sign of this Cross," holding up a Crucifix, "does your wife still live?"

"Woman," panted Rasselas, "you shall not step in between me and mine; you who left me in the past shall not teach desertion to another. My wife is no wife—she has forfeited the title by reason of her falseness and her vice. Vera, hear me; let me tell you of my lonely blighted existence; let me tell you of the tigress that is bound to me; let me point out that in the sight of God my marriage is nul. You are my wife, you only—my beloved. You were made for me, as I for you. By Heaven! I will be heard—you shall be mine. Nothing shall stand between us—nothing!"

"But God. And He is everything," said Mère Felise. "You shall not steal this soul, you shall not bruise and kill it. What you did in the past to me is forgiven and forgotten. The Gertrude of long ago is dead and buried. I bear you no resentment for my pain and sorrow—for the closing up of my life, just as I began to find it fair. I was just the sort of woman to deceive and leave; and a woman, thank God, who has been able to find comfort and consolation in things other than earthly."

"Vera, do not listen—look at me," he intreatingly interrupted. "Her words are as the idle mummery of a priest. How can she realise in this warped and narrow existence the power, the force, and the beauty of such love as ours? I have not seen my wife—curse her!—these many years. We will leave England, we will go far away, and forget everything save that we love. Do you hear me? I command you to come."

"Yes, I hear you," spoke Vera at last; and her face in its horrified anguish was most pitiful. "But your commands can now never be obeyed. God help me, I can never be your wife."

"Come away, darling—come away. This room stifles you. That woman with her corpse like dress fascinates you. Once outside, you will think differently. How can you reason beneath that great white cross—here—where everything seems to speak of death? In the sunshine, with the smell of the roses around us, we shall laugh and be glad, my queen. How can you be human in this quietness and this gloom?"

"Which will you choose?" said Mère Felise, unheeding the scowl of Rasselas, his biting contempt. "Will you fling aside honour and peace for the sunshine and the roses, or will you rest and recover in the twilight and shade?"

The girl stood erect between them, and she might have been taken for some young and shining angel, so beautiful was her face in its renunciation.

"I will choose the twilight and the shade," she uttered softly.

"You shall not, you shall not," cried Rasselas fiercely, and his lips blanched as he saw the resolution on the sweet and noble face of his Vera. "Ah! woman," turning to Mère Felise, "leave us to work out our destiny alone."

"It is already worked out," rejoined Vera, still very quietly. "Do you think, even if I would, that I could go away with the memory of her dear face?" pointing to the nun, who waited with meek, clasped hands, "do you think I could revel in the sunshine and the roses of love when I knew that she was carrying the lilies of renunciation? Do you imagine I could receive or respond to kisses that were by right your lawful wife's? Do you for one instant contemplate I could be content in riches and splendour while this poor darling has but a narrow cell and bed to lie upon? I should never know peace, I should be even more unhappy than I am. Oh! to think that it was you who caused my Mère Felise those long nights of weeping, those dreary days of mourning, this withdrawal from the world. When she comforted me in my old school days, and told me to beware of passion's pitfalls; when she counselled me to choose a good and honourable man, I never thought that I should suffer as she has suffered. Ah! Rasselas, you have much to answer for."

"But you love me still—you love me still. My sweet, my only wife, you cannot, I defy you to leave me."

As she watched his ardent eyes, his outstretched arms, the deep intreaty of his attitude, for an instant her mind wavered. Of what use to care for the world with such love to make it worth forgetting? Why think of that wife who had cursed his life, why listen to the words of one who had long since done with life?

As she thus faltered, something in the sublime patience of the eyes of the woman who had fought her victory and won—a glimpse of the crown she had worn, the cross she had uncomplainingly taken to her bosom—made her realise that sorrow borne with dignity, and loss borne with resignation, were better in the end, perhaps, than inclinations pampered and yielded to.

She, too, must gird herself with God's armour—she, too, would hereafter rank with those who loved not wisely, but too well.

And so turning the steadfast beauty of her eyes upon the man she renounced, she said quite firmly: "I—no—longer—love—you, Serge. You must go."

A low cry of approval from the nun's white lips—a savage exclamation from those of Rasselas, and Vera Darrell fell at the foot of the great white Calvary—unconscious but triumphant.

* * * * * * * *

It is three years later, and Hélène Colomba, now Mrs. Freddy Blair, is binding the orange blossoms on the beautiful dark hair of Vera.

For Jack Delamere has at last won his bride.

"You are quite, quite happy, darling?" questioned Hélène as she fastened the floating veil with expert fingers.

"As happy as you, dear," was the low, sweet reply.

"You have no regrets?"

"None."

1d. HOME NOTES. 1d.

HUNDREDS OF DESIGNS OF CHARMING FASHIONS.

BRIGHTLY WRITTEN HINTS ON ALL HOME MATTERS.

NO LADY SHOULD BE WITHOUT IT.

PAPER PATTERNS GIVEN AWAY.

ONE PENNY, EVERY TUESDAY.

1d. SHORT STORIES. 1d.

THIRTY-TWO PAGES.

EIGHT TO TEN CAPITAL SHORT STORIES EACH WEEK.

TWO SERIAL STORIES.

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED.

ONE PENNY, EVERY TUESDAY.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

BEECHAM'S ADVERTISEMENT COMPETITIONS.

£10 10s. £10 10s.

Prizes to the value of *TEN GUINEAS* will be awarded to the three readers who individually suggest appropriate wording to complete this advertisement. The sender of the best effort will receive Five Guineas, the second best Three Guineas, and the third Two Guineas. Competitors will take it for granted that this conversation in mid-air would be a somewhat hurried one, and, to be in keeping with the views of the artist, must certainly be witty. It should not consist of more than fifty words, must include the words "BEECHAM'S PILLS," and not be poetical. The competition will close December 31st.

All envelopes should be marked "WORDING." Address—THE PROPRIETOR OF "BEECHAM'S PILLS," ST. HELENS, LANCASHIRE.

Do not trouble to send this advertisement, better to keep it and show it to your friends. It will be re-inserted in *Pearson's Weekly* as soon as possible with the best chosen wording together with the names of the winners of the above amounts.